



Between Occultism and Fascism: Anthroposophy and the Politics of Race and Nation in Germany and Italy, 1900-1945

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BETWEEN OCCULTISM AND FASCISM: ANTHROPOSOPHY AND THE
POLITICS OF RACE AND NATION IN GERMANY AND ITALY, 1900-1945

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BETWEEN OCCULTISM AND FASCISM: ANTHROPOSOPHY AND THE
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The relationship between Nazism and occultism has long been an object of popular speculation and scholarly controversy. This dissertation examines the interaction between occult groups and the Nazi regime as well as the Italian Fascist state, with central attention to the role of racial and ethnic theories in shaping these developments. The centerpiece of the dissertation is a case study of the anthroposophist movement founded by Rudolf Steiner, an esoteric tendency which gave rise to widely influential alternative cultural institutions including Waldorf schools, biodynamic agriculture, and holistic methods of health care and nutrition. A careful exploration of the tensions and affinities between anthroposophists and fascists reveals a complex and differentiated portrait of modern occult tendencies and their treatment by Nazi and Fascist officials.

Two initial chapters analyze the emergence of anthroposophy's racial doctrines, its self-conception as an 'unpolitical' spiritual movement, and its relations with the *völkisch* milieu and with *Lebensreform* movements. Four central chapters concern the fate of anthroposophy in Nazi Germany, with a detailed reconstruction of specific anthroposophical institutions and their interactions with various Nazi agencies. Two final chapters provide a comparative portrait of the Italian anthroposophical movement during the Fascist era, with particular concentration on the role of anthroposophists in influencing and administering Fascist racial policy.

Based on a wide range of archival sources, the dissertation offers an empirically founded account of the neglected history of modern occult movements while shedding new light on the operations of the Nazi and Fascist regimes. The analysis focuses on the interplay of ideology and practice, the concrete ways in which contending worldviews attempted to establish institutional footholds within the organizational disarray of the Third Reich and the Fascist state, and shows that disagreements over racial ideology were embedded in power struggles between competing factions within the Nazi hierarchy and the Fascist apparatus. It delineates the ways in which early twentieth century efforts toward spiritual renewal, holism, cultural regeneration and redemption converged with deeply regressive political realities. Engaging critically with previous accounts, the dissertation raises challenging questions about the political implications of alternative spiritual currents and counter-cultural tendencies.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Peter Staudenmaier received a Bachelor of Arts in German Literature from the University of Wisconsin – Madison in 1998 and a Master of Arts in History from Cornell University in 2006.

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PREFACE

From Spiritual Science to Spiritual Racism

This is a study of an unusual movement in an unusual time. It deals with topics that are difficult to define precisely, and it takes issue with a variety of scholarly and popular interpretations of several controversial themes. It is both a historical account of an under-examined chapter in the history of fascism and the history of occultism, as well as an extended argument about the relevance of unorthodox beliefs about race. Rather than attempting a comprehensive overview of occult tendencies during the fascist era, it focuses on one central case study, a movement known as *anthroposophy*. Founded by Rudolf Steiner in the early years of the twentieth century, anthroposophy has become renowned in different parts of the world for its efforts on behalf of alternative education, holistic health care, organic farming and natural foods, environmental consciousness, and innovative forms of spiritual expression, among other causes. At the root of anthroposophy, located on the border between religion and science, lies an elaborate esoteric philosophy based on Steiner's teachings. A widely influential figure in occult circles who was raised in Austria, lived most of his adult life in Germany, and died in Switzerland, Steiner imparted an international character to his movement while grounding it firmly in German cultural values. In contemporary German contexts anthroposophy is recognized as "the most successful form of 'alternative' religion in the [twentieth] century."¹

Outside of Germany, the term 'anthroposophy' and the name Rudolf Steiner will be unfamiliar to many readers. Even those who have some experience with the public face of anthroposophy – through Waldorf schools, biodynamic farming,

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

Camphill communities, Weleda or Demeter products, and so forth – are sometimes surprised to learn that these phenomena are manifestations of an esoteric worldview. If the external trappings of anthroposophy are not always widely recognizable, its occult underpinnings are still less well known. Many anthroposophists today are apprehensive about ‘occult’ vocabulary, though Steiner and the founding generation of the movement used it freely. For Steiner’s present followers, what is often important about anthroposophical principles is not so much their historical pedigree but their practical application, and anthroposophists have earned respect for their contributions to pedagogical reform or their commitment to ecological sustainability or their work with developmentally disabled children and adults. By placing these activities and the ideas that inspired them into historical perspective, this study will show how complicated and conflicted their development was, in ways which may alter our understanding of their present image.

My reconstruction of this contested history will not provide an exhaustive account of anthroposophy in Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy, and inevitably it will not do full justice to the complexities involved. One primary task will be to trace the circuitous path that led from ‘spiritual science’ to ‘spiritual racism.’ Steiner described anthroposophy as a “spiritual science,” staking a claim which his followers took very seriously and endeavored to expand and establish as an alternative to what they viewed as the shortcomings of mainstream science. At the heart of this ambition was the belief that materialism had degraded scientific thought, and indeed all of modern culture, and that a thoroughgoing spiritual renewal was necessary in order to revive humanity’s relationship with both the natural and supernatural worlds.

Anthroposophist efforts in this direction took a wide variety of forms in many different fields, but the central focus here will be on esoteric conceptions of race and nation. By the time Germany and Italy embarked on a world war and elevated racial

principles to centerpieces of their regimes, some of Steiner's followers had gone from exploring spiritual science and spiritual renewal to propagating "spiritual racism" as the solution to the modern crisis. The factors that took them down this unforeseen road did not reflect the trajectory of the anthroposophist movement as a whole, but making sense of the evolution of occult racial thought under fascism entails understanding the transition from spiritual renewal to spiritual racism in its starkest form.

The interpretation proposed here is premised on the idea that anthroposophy embodied a contradictory set of racial and ethnic doctrines which held the potential to develop in different directions under particular political, social, and cultural conditions. In spite of anthroposophists' insistence that their worldview was 'unpolitical,' my argument will identify an implicit politics of race running throughout their public and private statements, a body of assumptions about the cosmic significance of racial and ethnic attributes that shaped their responses to fascism. Many of Steiner's followers considered their own views to be anti-nationalist and anti-racist, and there was no straight line that led inexorably to the extreme and explicit formulations of spiritual racism. What emerged were racial and ethnic stances that were frequently ambiguous and multivalent but that in several cases found a comfortable home in fascist contexts precisely because of their spiritual orientation, one that did not deign to concern itself directly with the distasteful realm of politics. The resulting history reveals the limits of a spiritual renewal approach to individual and social change, and of an unpolitical conception of new ways of life, even with the loftiest of aspirations. For some anthroposophists, such discourses of enlightenment and emancipation became bound up with authoritarian aims.

These developments did not take place in a vacuum. Anthroposophy was part of a broader stream of 'life reform' movements that held considerable appeal in early twentieth century Germany and brought together tendencies which seem like strange

bedfellows today, such as groups combining vegetarianism and holistic spirituality with Aryan supremacy. One way to understand cultural and political phenomena like these is as instances of left-right crossover, a recurrent pattern in Steiner's era.² Much of what made occult racial thought so volatile derived from this fusion of left and right. Similar dynamics emerged in other parts of Europe as well, and fed into the diffuse discontent with modern social life which helped pave the way for the rise of fascism. This combination of modern and anti-modern sentiments is characteristic of several of the movements examined here. A leading scholar of fascism's history has recently argued 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."³

Particularly in English-speaking contexts, the historical background to such trends is not always well known. The juxtaposition can be jarring when ideas that seem more at home in a New Age retreat than a fascist dictatorship are traced back to their sources. For scholars interested in the history and politics of esotericism, it is important to allow space for heterodox beliefs, even when those beliefs have a compromised past. The task is to understand movements like anthroposophy and try to make historical sense of them, not to marginalize or denigrate them as irredeemably tainted by their unacknowledged origins. It is also important to maintain a sense of the

² On left-right crossover in the reform milieu and counter-cultural and non-conventional circles see Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918* vol. I (Munich: Beck, 1990), 152-53, 564, 586, 772-73, 788-89, 828-32, and with reference to alternative spiritual groups George Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 287-88.

³ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave, 2007), 258. For reasons explained in the Introduction, the problematic concept of the 'modern' will play an important role in this study as one of the unavoidable basic terms of the discussion, despite its disadvantages.

countervailing possibilities and potentials latent within these heterodox movements, even while noting the political naiveté and historical oblivion they sometimes display. The seductive character of fascist culture and politics and the longing for a new and revitalized world led more perspicacious contemporaries astray as well, and the path that turned from spiritual science to spiritual racism was not built by occultists alone. Rather than an indictment of the follies of esoteric wisdom seeking, the history recounted here can serve as a reminder of the ambiguities of modernity in both its unconventional and familiar forms.

Examining the fortunes of occult ideas and movements in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy not only reveals unexpected aspects of occultism; it also brings to light important features of Nazism and Fascism themselves. My analysis gives critical attention to institutional factors in both the German and Italian contexts and shows the extent to which debates over racial theory were embedded in power struggles between competing factions within the Nazi hierarchy and the Fascist apparatus. The polycentric nature of the National Socialist bureaucracy and its hybrid of party and state offices went hand in hand with fundamental and longstanding disputes between different agencies, and between different groupings within the same agencies, about central components of Nazi doctrine. Like Fascist race thinking, Nazi racial thought was far from homogeneous, and the intricate interplay of institutional exigencies and ideological affinities sometimes yielded unanticipated consequences for Nazi officials and esoteric organizations alike. Similar dynamics applied to the concept of the German nation. Even stronger disagreements arose in areas where anthroposophists played a prominent part, including the role of alternative medicine, organic agriculture, and non-traditional schooling within Nazism's new order. The ensuing clashes among disparate elements in the Nazi leadership illuminate an often overlooked facet of Hitler's regime.

By focusing on the fate of a relatively small group devoted to idiosyncratic beliefs, and by approaching the matter from the margins rather than the center and from the bottom up as much as from the top down, a changed viewpoint begins to emerge that offers new ways of understanding esoteric ideas as well as fascist policies, practical pursuits as well as committed worldviews. This study challenges a number of perspectives that still find proponents in some scholarly quarters and in public consciousness. It challenges the image of the Nazi regime as a totalitarian monolith and shows instead how polycratic it was, with Hitler's lieutenants often enough working at cross purposes to one another. It challenges the notion that the crucial relationship between occultism and Nazism was one of ideological influence and looks instead at the complex institutional frameworks within which these ideologies were embedded, and the complicated relationships that emerged from them. It challenges the belief that Nazi officials simply rejected occultist groups across the board, as well as the belief that the Nazis themselves were fundamentally indebted to occult precepts or practices. It challenges the conclusion that Italian Fascism reluctantly adopted racist measures at the insistence of its Nazi ally, and provides a detailed examination of less familiar but highly influential variants of Fascist racial thought. Finally, it challenges the assumption that esoteric race theories were an anachronism or pre-modern or anti-modern and explores the degree of engagement between occult thinkers and modern scientific and cultural trends.

In addition to offering an alternative perspective on previous interpretations, this study introduces several new themes that have not received significant historical attention before. It provides the first extended analysis of the relation between anthroposophical race doctrines and Nazi and Fascist policies, and explores the multiple affiliations linking anthroposophists to other occult tendencies and to various political predispositions. It delineates the tenacious opposition to esoteric groups

within the Nazi security apparatus and deciphers the underlying reasons for this institutional animosity. It highlights the relevance of racial and ethnic tenets for Steiner's followers and their project of spiritual renewal, presenting anthroposophist arguments in their own original terms. It investigates the degree to which anthroposophists succeeded in making common cause with Nazi and Fascist functionaries across a number of fields, ideologically as well as practically. It shows that Waldorf schools, biodynamic agriculture, and other esoteric endeavors found admirers in unlikely places, and affords an alternative view of anthroposophy's past as well as its present. It poses provocative questions about the unexamined history of spiritual reform movements as well as underappreciated aspects of fascism's rise and fall.

These are controversial questions, and a historically contextualized account can help to forestall both guilt-by-association reasoning and ex post facto apologetics. A careful and clearly circumscribed investigation of one branch of the modern occult revival in the fascist period provides an opportunity to explore the subject in detail while remaining responsive to broader historical and intellectual concerns. But a sustained focus on anthroposophy as a case study of the interaction between occultism and fascism also presents definite limits. It is difficult to identify any single esoteric tendency that would be representative of the extraordinarily variegated occult spectrum as a whole, and my analysis does not assume that Steiner's movement can stand in for the entire modern occult scene. What makes anthroposophy a meaningful exemplar of these broader phenomena is its relatively mainstream status within the panoply of esoteric groupings, an important counterpoint to the marginal image of the occult overall. Much of this study revolves around the contrasts and tensions between anthroposophist self-conceptions and the perception of their ideas and activities by others, whether sympathetic or hostile. Steiner presented his teachings as an inclusive

alternative worldview, a systematic approach offering answers to questions in all areas of life, and this ambitious undertaking won anthroposophy enthusiasts as well as enemies. Anthroposophy's history can be seen as an instance of a larger contest between esoteric hopes and political possibilities, allowing 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.

The widespread perception of some sort of 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 them. But the links were rather ordinary, and can be explained not through the apparent deviance and oddness of occultism, but through its commonness and popularity, by its participation in and influence by central cultural currents of the era. The consoling thought of fascism and occultism as eruptions of irrationality, as little more than a counterfeit of modern reason and social progress, depends on a simplified view of a complex history; it forgets that “the myths which fell victim to the Enlightenment were themselves its products.”⁴ This dialectical intertwinement of myth and enlightenment is central to the unusual manner in which the relationship between occultism and fascism unfolded, at a time when both were on the rise. 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 and noble in our own time. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of this history can help to comprehend both its emergence and evolution in the previous century and its implications for today.

⁴ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 5.

Introduction

Racial Politics in the Modern Occult Revival and the Rise of Fascism

Writing in 1947, in the wake of the Nazi regime, the Second World War, and the Holocaust, Theodor Adorno offered a harshly critical portrait of occultism, characterizing belief in occult doctrines as “a symptom of the regression of consciousness” and “the metaphysics of fools.”¹ According to Adorno, occult worldviews prided themselves on their unconventional insights but actually reinforced conformism. More sinisterly, he argued, occultism was intimately connected to fascism and shared similar “thought-patterns” with it. Shortly before the advent of Nazi rule, in August 1932, Walter Benjamin excoriated occultism as a sign of social dissolution and cultural decline.² In March 1933, Thomas Mann suggested that the widespread interest in occult theories within German society had helped paved the way for the rise of Hitler.³ Ernst Bloch, for his part, castigated occultism in 1935 as ideologically close to National Socialism.⁴ For a number of observers at the time,

¹ Theodor Adorno, “Thesen gegen den Okkultismus” in Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1951), 321-29; in English as “Theses against occultism” in Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (London: Verso, 1974), 238-44.

² Walter Benjamin, “Light from Obscurantists” in Benjamin, *Selected Writings* vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 653-57; originally published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in August 1932. Benjamin’s critique is directed against Rudolf Steiner’s anthroposophy, the focus of this study.

³ See Mann’s diary entry from March 1933 in Thomas Mann, *Zeit und Werk* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1956), 108: “Das Niveau, das nötig war: Geheimwissenschaften, Halbwissenschaften und Schwindeleien; Sektenbildungen, alberne Hintertreppenreligionen (Weißenberg) und jederlei Humbug, Köhlerglaube, Schäfer-Salbaderei und Kurpfuscherei blühten, hatten Massenzulauf, und das alles wurde von den Gebildeten nicht als niedriger moderner Rummel, nicht als kulturelle Verelendung, sondern als die Wiedergeburt tiefer Lebenskräfte und der Volksseelenhaftigkeit empfunden und gefeiert. Der Boden war bereit auch für den absurdesten und schimpflichsten politischen Massen-Aberglauben. Das war der Glaube an Hitler.” For context see Priska Pytlik, “Thomas Mann und der Okkultismus” in Pytlik, *Okkultismus und Moderne: Ein kulturhistorisches Phänomen und seine Bedeutung für die Literatur um 1900* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005), 115-19.

⁴ Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Zurich: Oprecht & Helbling, 1935), 128-39; English edition: Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 169-78. Like Benjamin’s “Light from Obscurantists,” Bloch’s criticism concentrates on Steiner and anthroposophy. See also the withering evaluation of anthroposophy as a form of atavism in Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* vol. 3 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 1186-88, as well as Bloch’s earlier fundamental critique

occultism in Germany appeared to have something substantial in common with Nazism.

In distorted form, these bleak assessments of occultism by antifascist contemporaries seemed to be borne out by a host of post-war popular accounts which traced the rise of Nazism to supposed occult machinations and elaborated a baroque mythology of alleged esoteric underpinnings to Hitler's regime.⁵ The specter of 'Nazi occultism' remains a frequent theme in popular media.⁶ Such adumbrations of the topic miss the import of earlier critiques like Mann's or Adorno's, however; the concern of Hitler's foes was not that the origins of the Third Reich lay in obscure occult doctrines or that Nazism had come to power through occult means, but that

of Steiner, "Die Geheimlehrer" in Ernst Bloch, *Geist der Utopie* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1918), 238-43.

⁵ This sizeable genre includes Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier, *The Morning of the Magicians* (New York: Stein and Day, 1963); Dietrich Bronder, *Bevor Hitler kam* (Hannover: Pfeiffer, 1964); Trevor Ravenscroft, *The Spear of Destiny* (New York: Putnam, 1973); Jean-Michel Angebert, *The Occult and the Third Reich* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); J. H. Brennan, *Occult Reich* (London: Futura, 1974); Gerald Suster, *Hitler, the Occult Messiah* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981); Nigel Pennick, *Hitler's Secret Sciences* (Sudbury: Spearman, 1981); Robert Amberlain, *Les arcanes noirs de l'Hitlérisme* (Paris: Laffont, 1990); E. R. Carmin, *Das schwarze Reich* (Munich: Heyne, 1994); Siegfried Hagl, *Der okkulte Kanzler: Hitler und der Nationalsozialismus als esoterisches Phänomen* (Gräfelfing: Hagl, 2000); Michael Hesemann, *Hitlers Religion: Die fatale Heilslehre des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Pattloch, 2004); Pierluigi Tombetti, *I grandi misteri del nazismo: La lotta con l'ombra* (Milan: Sugarco, 2005); Marco Dolcetta, *Gli spettri del quarto Reich: Le trame occulte del nazismo dal 1945 a oggi* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2007); Michael FitzGerald, *Hitler's Occult War* (London: Hale, 2009); Paul Roland, *The Nazis and the Occult* (Edison: Chartwell, 2009). The proliferation of works in this vein can make it difficult to distinguish sensationalism from scholarship; for a recent example of the confusion between the two see Stephen Flowers and Michael Moynihan, *The Secret King: The Myth and Reality of Nazi Occultism* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2007).

⁶ For an early version see Lewis Spence, *The Occult Causes of the Present War* (London: Rider, 1940). Some contributions to this genre contain noteworthy research alongside credulous and overstated interpretations; see e.g. chapter three, "Racist Elements in the Occult Revival," in Francis King, *Satan and Swastika* (St. Albans: Mayflower, 1976), 43-59. Critical appraisals of this literature are available in historian Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke's pioneering essay "The Modern Mythology of Nazi Occultism" in Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany 1890-1935* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1985; republished by New York University Press in 1992 and by I. B. Tauris in 2004), and Hans Thomas Hakl's pamphlet *Unknown Sources: National Socialism and the Occult* (Edmonds: Holmes Publishing Group, 2000).

enthusiasm for occultism had contributed to a general predisposition toward cultural and political irrationality.⁷

Recent historical scholarship has provided a more nuanced portrait of the occult milieu in early twentieth century Germany.⁸ Rather than a benighted form of superstitious irrationalism and rejection of modernity, these studies view occultism as an alternative form of rationality and an alternative form of modernity.⁹ The flourishing of occult tendencies in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany, from this perspective, was a response to post-Enlightenment social transformations and an endeavor to expand the parameters of the modern beyond the boundaries of established and academic contexts. While these analyses may have more in common with Adorno's diagnosis than is sometimes acknowledged,¹⁰ they do open new

⁷ Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1962), 57, analyzes "antirationalistischen Geistesbewegungen" that sometimes served as vehicles for authoritarian, nationalist, and reactionary politics, including "in den mannigfachen Formen okkulten Mystik, zu denen als bedeutendste Bewegung die Steinersche Anthroposophie gehört." For a fuller historically grounded version of this argument see James Webb, *The Occult Establishment* (La Salle: Open Court, 1976), and Webb, *The Occult Underground* (La Salle: Open Court, 1974), originally published as Webb, *The Flight from Reason* (London: Macdonald, 1971); in German see Thomas Jung, *Esoterik und Konservatismus* (Konstanz: UVK, 2002), and in Italian Cecilia Gatto Trocchi, *Viaggio nella magia: La cultura esoterica nell'Italia di oggi* (Rome: Laterza, 1993).

⁸ An overview of this historiography, 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.

⁹ 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 insightful assessments of this new approach see Thomas Laqueur, "Why the Margins Matter: Occultism and the Making of Modernity" *Modern Intellectual History* 3 (2006), 111-35, and Marco Pasi, "The Modernity of Occultism: Reflections on some Crucial Aspects" in Wouter Hanegraaff and Joyce Pijnenburg, eds., *Hermes in the Academy* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 59-74. On 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); Bernice Rosenthal, ed., *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); and Bradford Verter, *Dark Star Rising: The Emergence of Modern Occultism, 1800-1950* (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1998). Rather than "a backlash against the Enlightenment," much of this recent historiography views modern occultism as a "bastard child" of Enlightenment thought (Verter, *Dark Star Rising*, 30).

¹⁰ See e.g. the counter-polemic against Adorno in Arthur Versluis, "Theodor Adorno and the 'Occult'" in Versluis, *The New Inquisitions: Heretic-Hunting and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Totalitarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 95-104; for a very different perspective cf.

vantage points from which to understand the complex evolution of modern occultism and its role in Germany history.

Occultism as a historical phenomenon is difficult to define with precision.

While the term itself sometimes carries negative connotations, it is now often seen as a variant of Western esotericism and a legitimate subject of scholarly inquiry, though considerable diffidence persists in some academic quarters.¹¹ Popular conceptions of the occult vary widely, and scholars differ on its character and delineation.¹² Even the basic terminology of ‘occult’ and ‘esoteric’ is frequently inconsistent. In addition to superficial and pejorative uses of the term, the concept of the ‘occult’ has been

Cary Nederman and James Gouling, “Popular Occultism and Critical Social Theory: Exploring Some Themes in Adorno’s Critique of Astrology and the Occult” *Sociological Analysis* 42 (1981), 325-32.

¹¹ For an incisive analysis of this tendency see Wouter Hanegraaff, “Forbidden Knowledge: Anti-Esoteric Polemics and Academic Research” *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 5 (2005), 225-54.

¹² Cf. Bettina Gruber, “Mystik, Esoterik, Okkultismus: Überlegungen zu einer Begriffsdiskussion” in Moritz Baßler and Hildegard Chatellier, eds., *Mystik, Mystizismus und Moderne in Deutschland um 1900* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 1998), 27-38; Edward Tiryakian, ed., *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, The Esoteric, and the Occult* (New York: Wiley, 1974); Mircea Eliade, “The Occult and the Modern World” in Eliade, *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 47-68; Colin Campbell and Shirley McIver, “Cultural Sources of Support for Contemporary Occultism” *Social Compass* 34 (1987), 41-60; Antoine Faivre, “What is Occultism?” in Lawrence Sullivan, ed., *Hidden Truths: Magic, Alchemy, and the Occult* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 3-9; Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Faivre, “Questions of Terminology proper to the Study of Esoteric Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe” in Antoine Faivre and Wouter Hanegraaff, eds., *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 1-10; Ekkehard Hieronimus, “Okkultismus” in Hubert Cancik, Burkhard Gladigow, and Karl-Heinz Kohl, eds., *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1998), vol. IV, 263-67; Horst Stenger, *Die soziale Konstruktion okkultur Wirklichkeit: Eine Soziologie des ‘New Age’* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1993); J. W. Burrow, “The Occult” in Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 219-33; Alexander Geppert and Andrea Braiddt, “Moderne Magie: Orte des Okkulten und die Epistemologie des Übersinnlichen, 1880-1930” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 14 (2003), 7-36; Björn Seidel-Dreffke, “Theosophie als okkultes Welterklärungsmodell” in Seidel-Dreffke, *Die russische Literatur Ende des 19. und zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts und die Theosophie E. P. Blavatskajas* (Frankfurt: Haag + Herchen, 2004), 53-68; Wouter Hanegraaff, “Occult/Occultism” in Hanegraaff, ed., *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) vol. II, 884-89; Marco Pasi, “Occultism” in Kocku von Stuckrad, ed., *The Brill Dictionary of Religion* vol. III (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1364-68; Kocku von Stuckrad, “Western Esotericism: Towards an Integrative Model of Interpretation” *Religion* 35 (2005), 78-97; Michael Bergunder, “Was ist Esoterik? Religionswissenschaftliche Überlegungen zum Gegenstand der Esoterikforschung” in Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, ed., *Aufklärung und Esoterik: Rezeption - Integration - Konfrontation* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2008), 477-507; Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

legitimately applied to a very broad array of historical phenomena, with specific resonances shifting significantly in particular periods and particular contexts.

Proponents of esoteric and occult worldviews themselves have moreover often used ‘occult’ and ‘esoteric’ interchangeably.¹³ Though today ‘esoteric’ may sound trendy while ‘occult’ may sound suspicious, this was not necessarily the case a century ago.

The history of occult beliefs and practices is lengthy and complicated, in Germany as elsewhere, and bound up with the parallel development of science and enlightenment in ways which remain controversial.¹⁴

¹³ See e.g. A. P. Sinnett, *The Occult World* (London: Trübner, 1881); Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism* (London: Trübner, 1883); H. P. Blavatsky, *Studies in Occultism* (Boston: Theosophical Book Company, 1897); Ludwig Deinhart, *Die Geheimlehre* (Leipzig: Max Altmann, 1909); H. P. Blavatsky, *The Esoteric Character of the Gospels: A Study in Occultism* (Toronto: Blavatsky Institute, 1927); Giovanni Colonna di Cesarò, *Il ‘Mistero’ delle Origini di Roma* (Milan: La Prora, 1938); M.C. Poincot, *Encyclopedia of Occult Sciences* (New York: McBride, 1939). In the words of anthroposophist Ludwig Deinhart, “Okkultismus bedeutet Geheimwissenschaft oder Esoterik.” Deinhart, *Das Mysterium des Menschen* (Berlin: Reichl, 1910), 105. According to the founding President of the Theosophical Society, “Theosophy” refers both to “esoteric truth” and to “methods of occult scientific research.” Henry Steel Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: The True Story of the Theosophical Society* (London: Putnam, 1895), 132. Though it will doubtless dissatisfy some readers, I will use both ‘occult’ and ‘esoteric’ throughout this study without a consistent distinction between them.

¹⁴ Cf. Neugebauer-Wölk, ed., *Aufklärung und Esoterik*; Lynn Thorndike, *The Place of Magic in the Intellectual History of Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1905); Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Yates, “The Hermetic Tradition in Renaissance Science” in Charles Singleton, ed., *Art, Science, and History in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), 255-74; Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1972); Wayne Shumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance: A Study in Intellectual Patterns* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Frances Yates, *Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge, 1979); Keith Hutchinson, “What Happened to Occult Qualities in the Scientific Revolution?” *Isis* 73 (1982), 233-53; Brian Vickers, ed., *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); G. MacDonald Ross, “Occultism and Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century” in A. J. Holland, ed., *Philosophy, Its History and Historiography* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985), 95-115; Simon Schafner, “Occultism and Reason” in *ibid.*, 117-43; Ingrid Merkel and Allen Debus, eds., *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe* (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988); Brian Copenhaver, “Natural magic, hermetism, and occultism in early modern science” in David Lindberg and Robert Westman, eds., *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 261-301; Patrick Grim, ed., *Philosophy of Science and the Occult* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Christoph Meinel, “Okkulte und exakte Wissenschaften” in August Buck, ed., *Die okkulten Wissenschaften in der Renaissance* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), 21-43; Brian Vickers, “Critical Reactions to the Occult Sciences During the Renaissance” in Edna Ullmann-Margalit, ed., *The Scientific Enterprise* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992), 43-92; Michel Pierssens, “The Turmoil of the Unknown: Unknown Forces, Paranormal Phenomena, and the Response of the Scientific Establishment in the 19th Century” *Diogenes* 169 (1995), 109-19; Brian Vickers, “The Occult in the Renaissance” *Annals of Science* 52 (1995), 77-84; Brian Copenhaver, “The Occultist Tradition and its Critics” in Daniel Garber, ed., *The Cambridge*

In its general contours, modern occultism encompasses an expansive range of pursuits that promise access to hidden sources of spiritual and practical wisdom and profound knowledge about the universe and the human soul, goals to be achieved through various forms of meditation, magic, the development of higher faculties, or a path of initiation. Practitioners hold that occult methods can be used for personal enlightenment, healing, spiritual enhancement, attaining higher levels of consciousness, discerning the future or past, discovering or recovering secret knowledge of the cosmos, and the cultivation of unseen powers of the soul. Occultism offers to reveal the correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm and unite spirit and nature in a re-enchanted world. Though it has an extensive occidental heritage on which to draw, modern Western esotericism simultaneously incorporates diverse Eastern elements, often refracted through an Orientalist lens. The occult milieu is typically fractious, with a record of repeated schisms and frequent if inconsistent overlap among different groups and tendencies, and has a particularly rich history in German-speaking Europe.

Through a variety of channels, ancient and early modern forms of European esotericism found their way into the mainstream of nineteenth-century German

History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 454-512; Wouter Hanegraaff, "Beyond the Yates Paradigm: The Study of Western Esotericism between Counterculture and New Complexity" *Aries* 1 (2001), 5-37; William Newman and Anthony Grafton, eds., *Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001); Kocku von Stuckrad, "Recent Studies on Western Esotericism: Some Reflections" *Numen* 49 (2002), 212-18; Mark Morisson, *Modern Alchemy: Occultism and the Emergence of Atomic Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Christopher Lehrich, *The Occult Mind: Magic in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Richard Noakes, "The Historiography of Psychical Research: Lessons from Histories of the Sciences" *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 72 (2008), 65-85; Wouter Hanegraaff, "Reason, Faith, and Gnosis: Potentials and Problematics of a Typological Construct" in Peter Meusburger, Michael Welker, and Edgar Wunder, eds., *Clashes of Knowledge: Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies in Science and Religion* (Berlin: Springer, 2008), 133-44; Heather Wolfram, *The Stepchildren of Science: Psychical Research and Parapsychology in Germany, c. 1870-1939* (New York: Rodopi, 2009); Kocku von Stuckrad, *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Esoteric Discourse and Western Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

thought, influencing figures such as Goethe and Hegel.¹⁵ But the extraordinary profusion of occultism now known as the modern occult revival crystallized in the 1870s with the beginning of the Theosophical Society. Founded in New York City in 1875, the Theosophical Society brought together spirituality and science in a somewhat volatile combination. Its central texts were authored by Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), a Russian noblewoman of German origin who advocated a “synthesis of science, religion, and philosophy” as the basis of theosophical thought.¹⁶ Blavatsky and her colleagues inaugurated the particular esoteric tradition that will be at the center of this study. While claiming an ancient pedigree, the theosophical strand within the modern occult revival was, in historical perspective, a classic instance of an invented tradition.¹⁷ Its contribution to German occultism, both ideological and organizational, was substantial.¹⁸

¹⁵ See Rolf Christian Zimmerman, *Das Weltbild des jungen Goethe: Studien zur hermetischen Tradition des deutschen 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Fink 1969); Christopher McIntosh, *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason: Eighteenth-Century Rosicrucianism in Central Europe and its Relationship to the Enlightenment* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Wouter Hanegraaff, “Romanticism and the Esoteric Connection” in Roelof van den Broek and Wouter Hanegraaff, eds., *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 237-68; Glenn Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Renko Geffarth, *Religion und arkane Hierarchie: Der Orden der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer als geheime Kirche im 18. Jahrhundert* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Anne Conrad, *Rationalismus und Schwärmerei: Studien zur Religiosität und Sinndeutung in der Spätaufklärung* (Hamburg: DOBU Verlag, 2008).

¹⁶ H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (New York: Bouton, 1877); Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy* (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1888). In the present study, the term ‘theosophy’ refers to this variant of esotericism, not to early modern forms of theosophy.

¹⁷ See Wouter Hanegraaff, “On the Construction of ‘Esoteric Traditions’” in Faivre and Hanegraaff, eds., *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, 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; Kocku von Stuckrad, “Whose Tradition? Conflicting Ideologies in Medieval and Early Modern Esotericism” in *ibid.*, 211-26; James Lewis and Olav Hammer, eds., *The Invention of Sacred Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Daniël van Egmond, “Western Esoteric Schools in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” in van den Broek and Hanegraaff, eds., *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, 311-46; Antoine Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge* (London: Equinox, 2005); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). For the history of modern theosophy see Bruce Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical*

The varieties of occult thought and action that flowered within German culture from the mid-nineteenth century onward drew on disparate intellectual sources and evolved in multiple directions. The growth of this heterogeneous movement was such that by the Weimar period, burgeoning public interest in the occult sustained a plethora of groups, publications, worldviews, and charismatic spokespeople with followers dispersed across the political spectrum. By the early 1930s, occultism was in several respects a mass phenomenon in Germany.¹⁹ One crucial element in this process of popularization was the esoteric appropriation of the rhetoric of science. Indeed the modern occult revival itself can be seen as a product of “the secularization of esotericism” in the post-Enlightenment era and a product of the hybridization of esoteric cosmologies and modern scientific cosmologies. “The impact of Western processes of rationalization and secularization,” notes historian Wouter Hanegraaff,

Enlightenment (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); James Santucci, “The Theosophical Society” in James Lewis and Jesper Petersen, eds., *Controversial New Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 259-94.

¹⁸ 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, characterizes theosophy as “the archetypal manifestation of occultist spirituality” (496). For additional detail on its German variants see Jörg Wichmann, *Die Renaissance der Esoterik* (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1990) and Norbert Klatt, *Theosophie und Anthroposophie: Neue Aspekte zu ihrer Geschichte* (Göttingen: Klatt, 1993). Non-theosophical forms of occultism have also played an important role in modern Germany; for background see Ulrich Linse, *Geisterseher und Wunderwirker: Heilssuche im Industriezeitalter* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996); Patrick Labriola, “German Intellectual History and American Romanticism: Spirit, Nature Philosophy, and the Occult” *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 37 (2002), 79-90; Heather Wolfram, “Parapsychology on the Couch: The Psychology of Occult Belief in Germany, c. 1870-1939” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 42 (2006), 237-60; Diethard Sawicki, “Spiritismus und das Okkulte in Deutschland, 1880-1930” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 14 (2003), 53-71.

¹⁹ Cf. Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*; Verter, *Dark Star Rising*; Sabine Doering-Manteuffel, *Das Okkulte: Eine Erfolgsgeschichte im Schatten der Aufklärung* (Munich: Siedler, 2008); Hans-Jürgen Glowka, *Deutsche Okkultgruppen 1875-1937* (Munich: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Religions- und Weltanschauungsfragen, 1981); Siegfried Gehrman, “Die Sehnsucht nach dem Wunder: Scharlatanerie und Wunderglaube am Vorabend des ‘Dritten Reiches’” in Rainer Walz, ed., *Anfechtungen der Vernunft: Wunder und Wunderglaube in der Neuzeit* (Essen: Klartext, 2006), 259-72; Karl Marbe, “Die okkultistische Bewegung in der Gegenwart” *Preußische Jahrbücher* 197 (1924), 47-59; A.H. Zeiz, “Die Okkultisten” in Rudolf Olden, ed., *Das Wunderbare oder die Verzauberten: Propheten in deutscher Krise* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1932), 237-71; Friedrich Mellinger, *Zeichen und Wunder: Ein Führer durch die Welt der Magie* (Berlin: Neufeld & Henius, 1933).

“represents *the* decisive watershed in the history of western esotericism.”²⁰ In this sense, modern occultism emerged out of older lineages of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance esotericism in response to societal shifts toward secularism, rationalization, and the rise of modern science. Esoteric thinkers reacted to such shifts by incorporating scientific vocabulary into their public discourse. Historian Olav Hammer observes: “it is precisely in science that the Esoteric Tradition has attempted to find one of its main sources of rhetorical support.”²¹

Other scholars argue that these accommodations to scientific terminology were not merely rhetorical maneuvers but represented a new synthesis of spiritual and scientific approaches. Historian Corinna Treitel, for example, maintains that modern German occultism sought to transcend the divide between science and religion and reclaim and reconfigure scientific methods within an esoteric framework.²² Instead of revealing occultism as a flight from reason, this approach argues that occultism reveals the ambiguities of modernity. Though they sometimes take esoteric claims to scientific status at face value, such interpretations offer important insights into the distinctive nature of modern occult thought. As noted above, however, the implications of this

²⁰ Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 406; cf. Ulrich Linse, “‘Säkularisierung’ oder ‘Neue Religiosität’? Zur religiösen Situation in Deutschland um 1900” *Recherches Germaniques* 27 (1997), 117-41.

²¹ Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 10. At the same time, occultists have usually positioned themselves as severe critics of conventional scientific approaches. “Polemics against mainstream or establishment science,” writes Wouter Hanegraaff, “are typical of occultism in all its forms.” Hanegraaff, “Occult/Occultism,” 887.

²² Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, passim; for a similar argument cf. Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, particularly chapter eight, “Occultism and the Ambiguities of the Modern,” 238-57. For context see Christoph Meinel, *Karl Friedrich Zöllner und die Wissenschaftskultur der Gründerzeit: Eine Fallstudie zur Genese konservativer Zivilisationskritik* (Berlin: Sigma, 1991); Michael Bergunder, “Das Streben nach Einheit von Wissenschaft und Religion: Zum Verständnis von Leben in der modernen Esoterik” in Eilert Herms, ed., *Leben: Verständnis, Wissenschaft, Technik* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2005), 559-78; 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; Rüdiger vom Bruch, Friedrich Wilhelm Graf and Gangolf Hübinger, eds., *Kultur und Kulturwissenschaften um 1900: Krise der Moderne und Glaube an die Wissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1989).

ongoing revision of scholarship on the occult are contested. Whereas earlier analyses emphasized the irrational aspects of esotericism, criticizing them as a regressive and obscurantist response to the vicissitudes of modern life, Treitel and others view occult practices as a genuine form of scientific investigation that was “joined to the liberal vision of a society slowly evolving toward a more enlightened future.”²³ Both perspectives reveal significant facets of the modern occult revival, and the contrasts between them indicate the historical work that still needs to be done toward a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

If the divergent historical treatments of occultism can be reconciled, one crucial factor that may bridge them is the role of racial thinking in modern esoteric movements. Race science was a prominent part of mainstream scientific research in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and racial assumptions suffused many liberal and evolutionary models of society.²⁴ In selectively appropriating scientific themes and liberal motifs, occult tendencies absorbed a variety of ideas about race and imbued them with spiritual significance. Theosophical thinkers incorporated racial categories into an overarching evolutionary paradigm uniting the spiritual and physical realms, which they cast as an alternative to the purportedly materialist science of the day. This scheme of spiritual evolution, partly structured

²³ Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, 190.

²⁴ See John Jackson and Nadine Weidman, *Race, Racism, and Science* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006); Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 248-50; George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987); Waltraud Ernst and Bernard Harris, eds., *Race, Science and Medicine, 1700-1960* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Ivan Hannaford, “Race is All, 1890-1939” in Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 325-68; Kenan Malik, “Race in the Age of Democracy” in Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 101-27; Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997); Christian Delacampagne, *Die Geschichte des Rassismus* (Düsseldorf: Artemis, 2005), particularly chapter 8, “Der Rassismus der Aufklärung,” 125-40; Christian Geulen, *Geschichte des Rassismus* (Munich: Beck, 2007); Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (London: Palgrave, 2010).

along racial lines, provided the scaffolding for multiple esoteric doctrines and anchored occult views on reincarnation, karma, the development of the soul, the evolution of humankind, and the unfolding of cosmic destiny. Race became a focal point for esoteric efforts to conjoin scientific and spiritual narratives of progress, and an emblem of the modern character of occult thought.

The interaction between scientific and esoteric discourses of race has yet to receive substantial scholarly attention. While there is a sizeable literature on occult racial theories in German-speaking Europe, much of it is devoted to relatively marginal sectors of the esoteric spectrum, and works which have taken occultist racial politics seriously have sometimes invoked too facile a conception of the continuities between esoteric race thinking and Nazi race ideology while neglecting the broader role of race within modern scientific and liberal contexts.²⁵ A number of the more prominent experts on theosophy, meanwhile, approach the topic from a notably sympathetic and at times apologetic perspective.²⁶ In light of longstanding academic resistance to scholarship on western esotericism, such efforts at vindication are understandable. On the subject of occult racial thought, however, they have yielded a distorted portrait of the historical circumstances and their significance. Most treatments of racial politics in the modern occult revival have thus either focused on

²⁵ The best such studies provide extensive empirical detail even if their analyses are partially out of step with recent re-interpretations of occultism; see above all Webb, *The Occult Establishment*; Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*; George Mosse, "The Occult Origins of National Socialism" in Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Fertig, 1999), 117-35 (original version: Mosse, "The Mystical Origins of National Socialism" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22 (1961), 81-96); 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 Racial Ideology: Content and Occult Sources" *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 3 (1986), 227-46; Wolfgang Treher, *Hitler, Steiner, Schreber* (Emmendingen: Oknos, 1993); Rene Freund, *Braune Magie? Okkultismus, New Age und Nationalsozialismus* (Vienna: Picus, 1995); Harald Strohm, *Die Gnosis und der Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997).

²⁶ See e.g. Robert Ellwood, *Theosophy: A Modern Expression of the Wisdom of the Ages* (Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1986), 88-102; James Santucci, "The Notion of Race in Theosophy" *Nova Religio* 11 (2008), 37-63; Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Helena Blavatsky* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2004).

somewhat peripheral and extravagantly racist esoteric worldviews, or have minimized the role of race in occult thought altogether.

The analysis I will present in the following study is in part an attempt to overcome these limitations. The premise of my approach is that occult racial doctrines are best viewed not as precursors to Nazism or unexceptional scientific hypotheses or innocuous expressions of spiritual harmony, but as efforts to stake out specifically esoteric positions within the contested terrain of modern race thinking. These efforts did not as a rule take heed of their own political ramifications, due partially to a tendency to concentrate on supernatural concerns rather than social conditions, and this left them open to appropriation by reactionary ideologies which recognized particular affinities between esoteric precepts and authoritarian practices. Nonetheless, occult race theories did not represent a throwback to pre-modern beliefs, but exemplified a distinctively modern approach to race and its ostensible significance strongly influenced by contemporary developments in the natural sciences. The concrete contours of esoteric racial concepts, however, were often idiosyncratic and markedly different from more familiar forms of race thinking. Viewed in retrospect, the details of occult racial thought can appear profoundly strange and difficult to decipher.

Historical assessment of this sort of material poses a number of interpretive challenges. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues for avoiding two contrary but intertwined temptations, which she terms “descriptive chauvinism” and “descriptive romanticism.”²⁷ The first involves assimilating the strange to the familiar, while the second means overemphasizing the exotic. Descriptive chauvinism portrays occult racial teachings as merely a minor variation on common themes; descriptive romanticism portrays these teachings as utterly foreign. Neither perspective captures

²⁷ Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 118-30.

what is historically distinctive about them. This problem becomes especially acute when confronted with esoteric ideas about the relation between the bodily and the spiritual. Theosophical authors, keen to burnish their scientific credentials while opposing materialism, adopted a notably labile series of racial and ethnic categories which often highlighted spiritual factors above corporeal ones. This was not as innovative as it might seem; the very concept of ‘race’ had all along included cultural, linguistic, intellectual, moral, and other non-physical components, wrapped around a putatively biological core. Esoteric thinkers did with race what they did with every topic they appropriated: they invested racial categories with special occult significance, posited them as the physical expression of a deeper spiritual essence, and incorporated them into a cosmic narrative of hidden forces, higher powers, karma, spiritual progress, and ascended beings directing earthly evolution and the development of the soul. “Races of men differ in spiritual gifts as in color, stature, or any other external quality,” Blavatsky wrote in her early work *Isis Unveiled*.²⁸ Her later works offered a richly elaborate account of the spiritual facets of racial difference.

What held these ideas together was the twin notion of a spirit of the race and a soul of the nation. For many occultists, each race had its own unifying spirit and each people or nation or ethnic community had its own shared soul. In esoteric teachings, these ideas were combined with assumptions, common in late nineteenth and early twentieth century European cultures, about spiritual evolution and racial progress, about particular peoples and races rising and falling, advancing and declining, creating new civilizations or dying out. The spirit of the race and the soul of the nation stood behind these processes and guided them as part of a cosmic plan. Racial categories were thus wedded to a conception of history unfolding in stages, leading gradually

²⁸ Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* vol. II, 588.

from lower to higher levels, represented on the physical plane by lower and higher racial and ethnic forms. Race, from an occult point of view, is an embodiment of spirit, and different races and peoples reflect different degrees of spiritual development.

The principal formulation of these theories is to be found in the works of the leading figures in the Theosophical Society, beginning with Blavatsky herself. Racial and national themes occupy a central place in dozens of theosophical texts. Although many of these texts include extensive racist content, membership in the Theosophical Society was open to people of all races and nations, and the Society's stated goal was to promote brotherhood and unity within humankind. For theosophists, however, brotherhood was not the same thing as equality; indeed the two were essentially opposites. Annie Besant (1847-1933), president of the Theosophical Society from 1907 onward, sharply contrasted "brotherhood" and "equality," endorsing the former and rejecting the latter.²⁹ Racial brotherhood, in theosophical eyes, was predicated on inequality and a hierarchical understanding of racial and spiritual evolution. These ideas were linked in turn to a social Darwinist view of racial and ethnic improvement. Theosophy offered an "account of human racial progression" and of "the moral evolution of the races." Through cosmic karma, "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."³⁰

Theosophy's racial politics were complicated by the Theosophical Society's relationship to anti-colonial movements and in particular its involvement in India,

²⁹ Annie Besant, *The Changing World* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1910), 75-102. Besant emphasized that the Theosophical Society's principle of "universal brotherhood" was based on a "hierarchical order." (77) For a typically unequivocal rejection of equality and insistence on hierarchy see Besant, "Some Results of Evolution" *Theosophical Review* January 15, 1898, 418-23; see also Besant, *Popular Lectures on Theosophy* (Chicago: Rajput Press, 1910), 14-28, and Besant, *Theosophy* (London: Dodge, 1913), 75-89.

³⁰ Alvin Boyd Kuhn, *Theosophy: A Modern Revival of Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Holt, 1930), 230.

where Blavatsky moved the Society's headquarters in 1879. Besant came to play a prominent role in the Indian home rule movement and participated in the Universal Races Congress in London in 1911.³¹ Some scholars have seen these factors as indicative of the progressive thrust of theosophical reform efforts,³² while others have pointed to the persistence of conservative, colonial and paternalist assumptions in theosophical thought and practice.³³ Theosophy promoted an esoteric variant of the Aryan myth which posited an ancient racial bond joining Indians and Europeans and

³¹ For background see Gustav Spiller, ed., *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress Held at the University of London, July 26-29, 1911* (London: King, 1911); Michael Biddiss, "The Universal Races Congress of 1911" *Race* 13 (1971), 37-46; Paul Rich, "'The baptism of a new order': The 1911 Universal Races Congress and the liberal ideology of race" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 7 (1984), 534-50; Robert Holton, "Cosmopolitanism or Cosmopolitanisms? The Universal Races Congress of 1911" *Global Networks* 2 (2002), 153-70; and issue 92 (Spring 2005) of *Radical History Review*, devoted to the Congress.

³² Catherine Wessinger, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1988); 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; Bevir, "Theosophy as a Political Movement" in Antony Copley, ed., *Gurus and Their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 159-79; Nancy Anderson, "'Mother Besant' and Indian National Politics" *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 30 (2002), 27-54.

³³ Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia During British Colonial Rule* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 107-34; 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); Joy Dixon, "Besant, Gandhi and Indian Nationalism" in Harold Coward, ed., *Indian Critiques of Gandhi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 67-86; Alan Trevithick, "The Theosophical Society and its Subaltern Acolytes (1880-1986)" *Marburg Journal of Religion* vol. 13 no. 1 (May 2008); Maria Misra, *Vishnu's Crowded Temple: India since the Great Rebellion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 63-64, 84-86. For additional context see Gauri Viswanathan, "The Ordinary Business of Occultism" *Critical Inquiry* 27 (2000), 1-20; Olav Hammer, "Same Message from Everywhere: The Sources of Modern Revelation" in Mikael Rothstein, ed., *New Age Religion and Globalization* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2001), 42-57; Mandakini Dubey, "Esotericism and Orientalism: Nineteenth-Century Narrative Initiations" (PhD dissertation, Duke University, 2003); Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 12-15; Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann, eds., *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London: Anthem, 2004); Srinivas Aravamudan, *Guru English: South Asian Religion in a Cosmopolitan Language* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 105-41; Peter van der Veer, "The Imperial Encounter with Asian Religions" *Radical History Review* 99 (2007), 253-59; Mark Singleton, "Yoga, Eugenics, and Spiritual Darwinism in the Early Twentieth Century" *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 11 (2007), 125-46; Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 330-93; Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); J. Barton Scott, "Miracle Publics: Theosophy, Christianity, and the Coulomb Affair" *History of Religions* 49 (2009), 172-96.

foresaw the rise of a new Aryan empire that would unite both.³⁴ While this framework seemed to elevate (some) Indians, it depended on the subordination of other racial groups as inferior. Theosophists taught that individual souls, called ‘Egos’ or ‘Monads’ in theosophical literature, strive toward spiritual perfection through a sequence of earthly incarnations in successively higher racial forms. This ladder of ascending races served a pivotal function in theosophy’s conception of reincarnation and karma, structured around a cyclical rotation of ‘Globes’ and ‘Rounds.’

In Blavatsky’s terms, racial evolution proceeded through a series of “root races,” each more advanced than the previous one, with every “root race” further divided into “sub-races.” The “yellow and red, brown and black” peoples represented the leftover remnants of previous races, the Lemurians and Atlanteans, who had been superseded by the Aryans.³⁵ Blavatsky’s magnum opus *The Secret Doctrine*, the central text of theosophy, repeatedly contrasted the Aryan race, at “the apex of physical and intellectual evolution,” to “the inferior races” and “the lowest specimens of humanity,” declaring that karmic disparities accounted for “the variation and great

³⁴ For background cf. Joan Leopold, “British Applications of the Aryan Theory of Race to India, 1850-1870” *English Historical Review* 89 (1974), 578-603; Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Vasant Kaiwar, “The Aryan Model of History and the Oriental Renaissance” in Vasant Kaiwar and Sucheta Mazumdar, eds., *Antinomies of Modernity: Essays on Race, Orient, Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 13-61; Romila Thapar, “The Historiography of the Concept of ‘Aryan’” in Thapar, ed., *India: Historical Beginnings and the Concept of the Aryan* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2006), 1-40; Peter Robb, ed., *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995); Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

³⁵ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* vol. II, 786. She referred to Africans, for instance, as “degenerate descendants” of the Atlanteans (ibid., 447), and claimed that the Indian Aryans, particularly “the comparatively fair Brahmans,” had subjugated the “dark-coloured Dravidians” in ancient times (ibid., 812). For further context and a variety of interpretations see Carla Risseuw, “Thinking Culture Through Counter-culture: The Case of Theosophists in India and Ceylon and their Ideas on Race and Hierarchy (1875-1947)” in Copley, ed., *Gurus and Their Followers*, 180-205; Gauri Viswanathan, “Conversion, Theosophy, and Race Theory” in Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 177-207; and 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.

difference between the intellectual capacities of races, nations, and individual men.”³⁶

Such racial distinctions, determined by karma, explained human diversity:

Though all were of one common origin, yet, for reasons given, their potentialities and mental capabilities, outward or physical forms, and future characteristics, were very different. Some superior, others inferior, to suit the Karma of the various reincarnating Monads, which could not all be of the same degree of purity in their last births in other Worlds. This accounts for the difference of races, the inferiority of the savage and other human varieties.³⁷

Those left behind in the cycle of racial evolution were destined for extinction:

Redskins, Eskimos, Papuans, Australians, Polynesians, etc. – all are dying out. Those who realize that every Root-Race runs through a gamut of seven sub-races with seven branchlets, etc., will understand the ‘why.’ The tide-wave of incarnating Egos has rolled past them to harvest experience in more developed and less senile stocks, and their extinction is hence a Karmic necessity.³⁸

While engaging in running polemics against various representatives of “materialistic science,” Blavatsky’s racial and ethnic theories borrowed heavily from contemporary biology, geology, philology, geography, and anthropology. *The Secret*

³⁶ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* vol. II, 209, 171, 177, 332. Blavatsky’s racial doctrines, like those of other theosophists, were contradictory. At times she rejected the notion of inferior and superior races, while at other times endorsing it, and she provided inconsistent numbers and names for the various racial groups she posited. Early and copiously detailed presentations of theosophical race teachings can be found in Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism*, and *Man: Fragments of Forgotten History*, “by two chelas in the Theosophical Society” (London: Reeves and Turner, 1885).

³⁷ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* vol. II, 259.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 825. See also 824: “The Malays and Papuans are a mixed stock, resulting from the intermarriages of the low Atlantean sub-races with the seventh sub-race of the Third Root-Race. Like the Hottentots, they are of indirect Lemuro-Atlantean descent. It is a most suggestive fact – to those concrete thinkers who demand a physical proof of Karma -- that the lowest races of men are now rapidly dying out; a phenomenon largely due to an extraordinary sterility setting in among the women, from the time that they were first approached by the Europeans. A process of decimation is taking place all over the globe among those races whose ‘time is up’ – among just those stocks, be it remarked, which Esoteric Philosophy regards as the senile representatives of lost archaic nations. It is inaccurate to maintain that the extinction of a lower race is invariably due to cruelties or abuses perpetrated by colonists. Change of diet, drunkenness, etc., have done much; but those who rely on such data as offering an all-sufficient explanation of the crux, cannot meet the phalanx of facts now so closely arrayed. [...] Ethnology will sooner or later have to recognize, with Occultists, that the true solution has to be sought for in a comprehension of the workings of Karma.”

Doctrine is filled with references to recent scientific discoveries and controversies. In Blavatsky's interpretation, however, racial claims were expressed in sacral terms:

Mankind is obviously divided into God-informed men and lower human creatures. The intellectual difference between the Aryan and other civilized nations and such savages as the South Sea Islanders is inexplicable on any other grounds. No amount of culture, no generations of training amid civilization, could raise such human specimens as the Bushmen, the Vedddhas of Ceylon, and some African tribes, to the same intellectual level as the Aryans, the Semites, and the Turanians so-called. The 'Sacred Spark' is missing in them, and it is they who are the only inferior races on the globe, now happily – owing to the wise adjustment of Nature which ever works in that direction – fast dying out. Verily mankind is 'of one blood,' but not of the same essence.³⁹

These teachings were continued by Blavatsky's theosophical successors.

According to Besant, a divinely supervised program of "deliberate breeding" led to "the ideal type that now we know as the Aryan."⁴⁰ Besant's 1904 book *The Pedigree of Man* contrasted the "backward, disappearing races" to the "more advanced" races, noting that the Aryans were progressing toward spiritual perfection while the "degraded remnants" of obsolete races declined toward a "semi-animal" state.⁴¹

Drawing on the ethnological research of the era, her descriptions of specific racial and ethnic groups combined detailed nomenclature with esoteric narratives about lost

³⁹ Ibid., 439. Blavatsky characterized "the Australian savages" as "lower tribes" descended from "human monsters" (203), explaining: "The survivors of those later Lemurians, who escaped the destruction of their fellows when the main continent was submerged, became the ancestors of a portion of the present native tribes. Being a very low sub-race, begotten originally of animals, of monsters, whose very fossils are now resting miles under the sea floors, their stock has since existed in an environment strongly subjected to the law of retardation. Australia is one of the oldest lands now above the waters, and in the senile decrepitude of old age, its 'virgin soil' notwithstanding. It can produce no new forms, unless helped by new and fresh races, and artificial cultivation and breeding." (207)

⁴⁰ Besant, *The Changing World*, 116.

⁴¹ Annie Besant, *The Pedigree of Man* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904), 90, 104, 109. For critical background on Besant's longstanding commitment to a particular variety of evolutionary thought, including important Malthusian and social Darwinist elements, see David Stack, *The First Darwinian Left: Socialism and Darwinism 1859-1914* (Cheltenham: New Clarion, 2003), 6-8, 14, 48-51, 90.

continents, racial migrations, and a spiritual clash of civilizations.⁴² A 1913 book by Besant and her colleague Charles Leadbeater recounted the formation of the Aryan race under the direction of a “Race Manu” to ensure that “the best types” would be preserved and “purified.” In another invocation of social Darwinist rhetoric, the leading theosophists declared: “Only the stronger survived; the weaker were killed off.” Eugenic metaphors were also an important part of the theosophical vocabulary:

It was rather like looking over a flock of sheep, and choosing the most suitable. Of these, numbers would be dropped out on the way, and the selection would be thus narrowed down from time to time.⁴³

This process stood under the aegis of “an Occult Hierarchy, which guides and shapes evolution.”⁴⁴ According to Leadbeater, “our own Aryan race” arose “by judicious selection” in which “the best-developed” were protected from “any admixture with lower races.”⁴⁵ But non-Aryan racial groups are “fallen, degraded semblances of humanity.”⁴⁶ For theosophy, “the ultimate object of human evolution is

⁴² Compare these passages from *The Pedigree of Man*: “The aboriginal Australians and Tasmanians, now well-nigh extinct, belong to the seventh Lemurian sub-race; the Malays and Papuans have descended from a cross between this sub-race and the Atlanteans; and the Hottentots form another remnant. The Dravidians of southern India are a mixture of the seventh sub-race with the second Atlantean sub-race. Where a really black race is found, such as the negro, Lemurian descent is strongly marked.” (114) “The fifth sub-race, the Teutonic, also migrating westwards, occupied all Central Europe, and is now spreading over the world: it has occupied the greater part of North America, driving before it the old Atlantean stock; it has seized Australia and New Zealand, the remnants of still more ancient Lemuria, and the poor relics of that dying Race are vanishing before it. High is it rearing its proud head over the countries of the globe, destined to build a world-wide Empire, and to sway the destinies of civilisation.” (151)

⁴³ Annie Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater, *Man: Whence, How and Whither* (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1913), 249, 239. Regarding earlier rounds of evolution, they write of “the separation between those who were capable and those who were incapable of further progress,” a separation which occurs through a war between “the savage tribes” and the “more evolved” race, led by “a man of much higher type and lighter complexion,” resulting in “the extermination of the savages.” They explain: “From the higher standpoint, a stage had been reached beyond which these savages were incapable of advancing,” and because of their extermination “very great emotional and mental progress was made by the more advanced egos.” Thanks to this “Day of Judgement,” “there were no hopeless laggards to be a clog on evolution.” (45-55)

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3. See also 331: “it would seem as though a low type of body were sometimes required for little-advanced egos, who had gone through many previous sub-races without making much progress, and were thrown into contact with a higher race in order to force them forward.”

⁴⁵ C.W. Leadbeater, “Races,” in Sarah Corbett, ed., *Extracts from the Vâhan* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904), 671-3. See also “The Karma of Races” in the same volume (104-05).

⁴⁶ *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, edited by A. T. Barker (London: Fisher Unwin, 1923), 151.

the production of the perfect man,” and “it is therefore very natural that various races, each with its own special conditions so arranged as to be favourable to the production of a particular set of virtues, should be required to provide an appropriately varied series of surroundings for the evolving Ego.”⁴⁷ Spiritual prerogatives drive physical evolution, and this explains theosophy’s emphasis on “the evolutionary progress represented by the successive races.”⁴⁸ The racial teachings expounded by Blavatsky, Besant, and Leadbeater were amplified in many other theosophical publications.⁴⁹

Combining universal brotherhood with inequality and hierarchy, theosophy elevated race and ethnicity to markers of spiritual ascent or debasement. The spirit of the race and the soul of the nation had definite physical and cultural correlates, and

⁴⁷ Leadbeater in Corbett, ed., *Extracts from the Vâhan*, 678.

⁴⁸ A.P. Sinnett in *ibid.*, 736.

⁴⁹ Examples include Poinsoot, *Encyclopedia of Occult Sciences*, 101-47; Deinhard, *Die Geheimlehre*, 38-75; Deinhard, *Das Mysterium des Menschen*, 249-53; Claude Falls Wright, *An Outline of the Principles of Modern Theosophy* (New York: The Path, 1894), 68-73, 124-41; Annie Besant, “Collective Karma” *Lucifer* October 1895, 142-46; L. E. Harcus, “Theosophy in Outline” *Theosophist* August 1896, 649-57; Annie Besant, “The Evolution of the Soul” *Theosophist* August 1897, 674-78; A.P. Sinnett, *The Beginnings of the Fifth Race* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1897); W.A. Mayers, “Contemporary National Evolution” *Theosophist* June 1898, 523-28; James Stirling, “Notes on Lemuria” *Theosophical Review* December 1900, 347-55; C.W. Leadbeater, *Man Visible and Invisible* (New York: Lane, 1903), 87-94; G. Dyne, “Gunas, Caste and Temperament” *Theosophical Review* April 1904, 150-63; Fio Hara, “The Secret Doctrine of Racial Development” *Theosophist* August 1904, 661-69; William Scott-Elliot, “Concerning Atlantis” *Theosophical Review* January 1905, 444-50; A. Schwarz, “Notes on the Pedigree of Man” *Theosophist* June 1905, 545-57; A.P. Sinnett, *The Growth of the Soul* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1905), 312-15, 332-35; G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1906), 26-28, 39-44; N., “The Motherhood of a Race” *Theosophist* August 1908, 981-84; C. W. Leadbeater, “The Beginnings of the Sixth Root Race” *Theosophist* February 1910, 487-98; Louise Appel, “Karma and Heredity” *Theosophist* December 1911, 380-91; Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* (Ocean Park: Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1911), 270-355; Edouard Schuré, *The Great Initiates* (London: Rider, 1913), 3-25; C.W. Leadbeater, “The Aryanisation of Egypt” *Theosophist* January 1913, 577-84; Marie Russak, “The Call of the Sixth Root Race” *The Channel: International Quarterly of Occultism* December 1915, 99-103; Vance Thompson, “The New Race in the West” *The Channel* January 1916, 39-42; Margaret Murchie, “The Bantus of South Africa” *Theosophist* September 1918, 537-44; Alice Hamaker, “Karma: Its Racial and National Aspect” *Theosophist* April 1925, 53-67; L. W. Rogers, *Elementary Theosophy* (Chicago: Theosophical Book Company, 1929), 118-25, 204-09; Basil Crump, *Evolution as Outlined in the Archaic Eastern Records* (London: The Blavatsky Association, 1930); Irene Hudson, *Heredity in the Light of Esoteric Philosophy* (London: Rider, 1932); Isabelle Pagan, *Racial Cleavage, or The Seven Ages of Man* (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1937); Gertrude van Pelt, *Rounds and Races: Man’s Divine Parentage and Destiny* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1948); Basil Howell, “Some Factors in Racial Evolution” *Theosophist* March 1957, 403-08.

knowledge of them was meant to promote “better understanding between the nations.”⁵⁰ Despite this accent on fraternity and amity, theosophical spokespeople did not shy away from stark judgements on particular peoples. Blavatsky’s pejorative statements about Jews illustrate this tendency. While *Isis Unveiled* made affirmative references to Judaism,⁵¹ *The Secret Doctrine* drew a pointed contrast between Aryan spirituality and Jewish materialism, characterizing the Jews as an “unspiritual people” who have “falsified” and “mangled” their own scriptures and systematically degraded the traditions they borrowed from other peoples; Judaism is “a religion of hate and malice toward everyone and everything outside of itself.”⁵² The “national features” of this “stiff-necked race” included “the idiosyncratic defects that characterize many of the Jews to this day – gross realism, selfishness, and sensuality.”⁵³ According to Blavatsky, “if the root of mankind is one, then there must also be one truth which finds expression in all the various religions – except in the Jewish.”⁵⁴

Theosophical texts also contain more positive appraisals of Judaism⁵⁵ and less derogatory claims about ‘non-Aryan’ racial groups. Antisemitic tropes can be readily found in other occultist publications as well, without specific reference to theosophical

⁵⁰ Besant and Leadbeater, *Man: Whence, How and Whither*, 471.

⁵¹ Even here, however, Blavatsky is keen to show that the Aryans “never borrowed anything at all” from the Semites (*Isis Unveiled* vol. II, 426), and she characterizes the Semitic people as “perhaps the least spiritual of the human family” who have consequently “left nothing original, nothing that was not borrowed from the Aryan thought” (*ibid.*, 434).

⁵² Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* vol. II, 492, 494. See also vol. III, 170: “Every nation in antiquity had its traditions based on those of the Aryan Secret Doctrine; and each nation points to this day to a Sage of its own race who had received the primordial revelation from, and had recorded it under the orders of, a more or less divine Being. Thus it was with the Jews, as with all others. They had received their Occult Cosmogony and Laws from their Initiate, Moses, and they have now entirely mutilated them.”

⁵³ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* vol. II, 494. She also emphasizes “the immense chasm between Aryan and Semitic religious thought, the two opposite poles, Sincerity and Concealment.” (vol. I, 411)

⁵⁴ Helena Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1889), 45. According to Blavatsky’s secretary G. R. S. Mead, joint leader of the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society and editor of *Theosophical Review*, “no greater foe has dogged the footsteps of Christianity than the evil genius of Jewish particularism, which has ever instigated it to every outbreak of intolerance and persecution.” (Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 7; see also the section titled “Jewry,” 86-95)

⁵⁵ See e.g. Gertrude Platnauer, “Judaism as a Living Religion” *Theosophical Review* August 1908, 528-37.

tenets.⁵⁶ But the basic concepts of racial hierarchy and racial evolution run throughout theosophist writings and have had a lasting influence on occult racial thought overall. In German, the best known instance of this influence is an esoteric doctrine called ariosophy, whose leading thinkers were the Austrian authors Guido List (1848-1919) and Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (1874-1954). Ariosophy preached an aggressively racist and antisemitic synthesis of theosophy and Aryan mythology and eventually spread from Vienna to Germany, where it inspired some of the small and obscure circles associated with early National Socialists.⁵⁷ The most notorious of these groups is the

⁵⁶ Two revealing examples, with several parallels to anthroposophy, come from Canadian occultist author Manly Hall and English Christian esotericist C.G. Harrison. A central figure in the mid-century esoteric scene in California, Hall was best known for producing the occult compendium *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*; anthroposophists today sometimes characterize him as an “Initiate.” Hall was the publisher of an important early New Age journal, *Horizon*, based in Los Angeles. The premier issue of the periodical included Hall’s esoteric perspective on the ‘Jewish question’: Manly P. Hall, “The Jew Does Not Fit In” *Horizon* August 1941, 9-11. Categorizing Jews as “Asiatics,” Hall wrote that “Jews exist within our midst as a group of people who are essentially Oriental.” (10) According to Hall, Jewish existence is based on a “principle of segregation” which “Karma is breaking down” so that “one human family” can emerge. While acknowledging the ongoing persecution of European Jews, Hall held that this was the Jews’ fault: “It is the ego in Judaism which causes the Jew to say, ‘I am a Jew,’ and it has been his destroyer.” He explicitly rejected the notion that antisemitic persecution was responsible for the Jewish predicament in 1941, insisting instead that Jews themselves were “at fault” for their plight. “Persecution of the Jews has been largely charged up as retribution for the Jew’s economic attitude, and many have been the rebuttal explanations that the Jewish attitude is the outgrowth and result of his persecution in Europe. In my belief, this has little to do with the way a Jew does business. I believe rather that he is governed by an Oriental psychology of living; it is important to recognize that he does not view business the way we view business. [...] For, essentially the Jew is an Oriental, and as such he has the Oriental consciousness, Oriental viewpoint.” (9) Hall concluded: “I firmly believe that the karma of the Jew holds a gradual dying out of racial persecution of Jews as a class in the degree and with the rapidity that the Jew forgets he is a Jew and remembers that he is a human being.” (11) Harrison’s invective was more alarmed. Best known as author of *The Transcendental Universe: Lectures on Occult Science, Theosophy, and the Catholic Faith* (currently published by the Anthroposophic Press), Harrison warned in the 1920s against the “Jewish Peril,” writing of a “world-wide conspiracy” that is “engineered by Jews.” This international Jewish conspiracy aimed to “destroy the whole fabric of our social structure.” According to Harrison, “in every country the Jew is an alien, and is keenly conscious of it. However much he may pose as a patriotic Englishman, Frenchman, or American, in his heart he despises the Gentile.” Moreover, “every Jew, even though he may be an atheist, from the financial magnate in Park Lane to the pedlar of lemons in Whitechapel, expects a messiah who will establish a world-wide Jewish empire on the ruins of Gentile civilization.” C. G. Harrison, *The Creed for the Twentieth Century* (London: Longmans, 1923), 108-09.

⁵⁷ The classic study of ariosophy is Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, which despite its title is somewhat circumspect in tracing direct lines of influence by ariosophy on Nazism. See also Ekkehard Hieronimus, “Lanz von Liebenfels: ‘Lebensspuren’” in Albrecht Götz von Olenhusen, ed., *Wege und Abwege: Beiträge zur europäischen Geistesgeschichte der Neuzeit* (Freiburg: Hochschulverlag, 1990), 157-71.

Thule Society, which is sometimes considered an occultist sect but is perhaps better seen as a gathering point for the far right in Munich in the aftermath of World War One.⁵⁸ Because of its presumed links to Nazism, ariosophy has garnered considerable notice, both scholarly and popular.

This interest in ariosophy has prompted impressive historical studies of the racial politics of modern German occultism. Yet the focus on ariosophy can have a distorting effect. In several ways, ariosophical thinking was far from the mainstream of theosophical race theory and represented an extreme version of occult racism. Ariosophists viewed the European Aryans, above all the ‘Ario-Germans,’ as semi-divine creatures locked in millennial combat with monstrous and demonic inferior races. Of particular concern to the blonde and heroic Aryans were the sub-human Jews and the bestial non-white races. Adopting terms such as ‘Wotanism,’ ‘Armanism,’ and ‘theozoology’ to describe the tenets of their worldview, ariosophists advocated strict measures of racial purification as part of their emphatically racial religion, an amalgam of theosophist, Christian, and neo-pagan motifs. While many of these teachings fall within the spectrum of theosophical doctrines, they are not necessarily the most representative example of such doctrines.

In the context of the modern German occult revival, the chief inheritor of theosophy’s legacy was not ariosophy but anthroposophy, the esoteric movement founded by Rudolf Steiner and the primary subject of this study. Steiner (1861-1925) served as head of the German section of the Theosophical Society for a decade before forming the Anthroposophical Society, and today is recognized as perhaps the

⁵⁸ Cf. Reginald Phelps, “‘Before Hitler Came’: Thule Society and Germanen Orden” *Journal of Modern History* 25 (1963), 245-61; Hermann Gilbhard, *Die Thule-Gesellschaft: Vom okkulten Mummenschanz zum Hakenkreuz* (Munich: Kiessling, 1994); Detlev Rose, *Die Thule-Gesellschaft: Legende, Mythos, Wirklichkeit* (Tübingen: Grabert, 1994).

foremost figure in twentieth-century German esotericism.⁵⁹ Considered by his followers an Initiate, a Seer, a spiritual master blessed with clairvoyant powers and a herald of timeless occult truths, Steiner and his work resist historical analysis. Understanding the emergence of modern German esoteric thought, its racial precepts and its encounter with Nazism, nonetheless demands scholarly engagement with anthroposophy. Unlike theosophical groups, which were splintered and generally inward-focused in Germany after World War One, anthroposophy was a growing movement asserting itself as a visible force in German public life. Unlike ariosophy, with its pronounced right-wing affiliations and blatant racism, anthroposophy represented a more mainstream face of occultism interacting with the modern world.

The extent to which anthroposophy, ariosophy, theosophy and other esoteric worldviews nevertheless formed a continuum will be explored in subsequent chapters; anthroposophists often had little trouble finding common ground with other occultists, including far-right occultists.⁶⁰ Within the broad ideological landscape of the modern German occult revival, however, anthroposophy was on the whole among the more progressive tendencies. Its points of contact with Nazi policy were not obvious, as with ariosophy, and its multifaceted involvement in German society seemed to point in a variety of different directions. Its early history indicated several potential lines of development, toward the left and toward the right. Steiner's stance on racial and ethnic

⁵⁹ For a book-length study in English see Geoffrey Ahern, *Sun at Midnight: The Rudolf Steiner Movement and Gnosis in the West* (Cambridge: Clarke, 2009), original edition: Ahern, *Sun at Midnight: The Rudolf Steiner Movement and the Western Esoteric Tradition* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1984). Ahern's study has several notable shortcomings; it is based entirely on English-language sources; it often takes an ethnographic approach, relying on interviews with anthroposophists for even basic factual claims; and the second edition does not incorporate the extensive literature on Western esotericism which has emerged since the first edition was published. The book nevertheless provides a useful overview for readers unfamiliar with anthroposophy. A more discerning analysis, focused on Waldorf education in particular, is now available in English from a German expert on the history of pedagogical reform movements: Heiner Ullrich, *Rudolf Steiner* (London: Continuum, 2008).

⁶⁰ At the same time, anthroposophists frequently denounced "occult forces" and accused other occult groups of damaging German spiritual life. This is a common pattern; occultists routinely attack other occultists, discerning dangerous "occult forces" and "occult powers" behind various supposedly deleterious modern phenomena.

questions was particularly complex and contradictory. Examining the politics of race and nation in anthroposophy during the first half of the twentieth century, in the context of Nazism's rise to power, provides a case study in the complicated interaction between occultism and fascism.

Depicted by its adherents as a "spiritual science," anthroposophy arose in the first decade of the twentieth century as an attempt to establish occult insights on a rational and empirical foundation.⁶¹ In the words of a proponent: "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."⁶² Its scientific aspirations were contested at the time and remain so today, but are important to the movement's self-understanding.⁶³

Anthroposophists believe that there are "higher worlds" beyond the ordinary world and that access to these higher worlds or spiritual dimensions can be achieved by following Steiner's indications. Events in the ordinary world 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,

⁶¹ For a succinct early presentation in English 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; Galbreath, "Spiritual Science in an Age of Materialism: Rudolf Steiner and Occultism" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1970); Robert Sumser, "Rational Occultism in *Fin de Siècle* Germany: Rudolf Steiner's Modernism" *History of European Ideas* 18 (1994), 497-511.

⁶² Eleanor Merry, "The Anthroposophical World-Conception: An Introductory Outline" *Anthroposophy: A Quarterly Review of Spiritual Science* 7 (1932), 289-319, quote on 293.

⁶³ See Max Dessoir, "Anthroposophie" in 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 (English translation: Max von Laue, "Steiner and Natural Science" *Transition* 61 (2000), 160-65); 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; Mark Grant, "Steiner and the Humours: The Survival of Ancient Greek Science" *British Journal of Educational Studies* 47 (1999), 56-70; Ullrich, *Rudolf Steiner*, 127-35; Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 225-28; Zander, "Esoterische Wissenschaft um 1900."

spiritual Individualities, stand as guides and leaders behind all human evolution and human happenings.”⁶⁴ Steiner’s descriptions of the higher worlds include detailed accounts of angels, archangels, demons, spiritual hierarchies, and forces attempting to divert spiritual seekers from the proper path. The two most important and perilous 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.

Steiner was a prolific author and lecturer, and his teachings are spelled out in hundreds of books.⁶⁵ These teachings, which Steiner maintained were the fruit of his own clairvoyant perception, include theosophical ideas about karma and reincarnation, an elaborate evolutionary cosmology, esoteric explanations of natural phenomena, and denunciations of materialism, abstract intellectuality, and cultural decay. In line with other variants of modern occultism which adopted concepts dating back to antiquity, anthroposophy holds that each human individual comprises a body, soul, and spirit, and that the spirit partakes of the eternal while the physical body is a transitory form and a sheath for the soul. Anthroposophy also posits a more complex arrangement, including the etheric body, the astral body, and the ‘I’ as the paramount spiritual core of every individual. Steiner was equally critical of established religion and of mainstream science and academic learning, and presented anthroposophy as a comprehensive alternative which integrated esoteric insights into an all-encompassing worldview. The remarkable breadth of his creative achievements in an impressive variety of fields stands out within the panorama of modern occult movements. His

⁶⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *Occult History* (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Company, 1957), 8.

⁶⁵ Central works include Rudolf Steiner, *An Outline of Occult Science* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1914; original edition: Steiner, *Die Geheimwissenschaft im Umriss*, Leipzig: Max Altmann, 1910); Steiner, *Theosophy: An introduction to the supersensible knowledge of the world and the destination of man* (London: Kegan Paul, 1910); 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).

teachings have had a notable influence on a range of cultural figures, including Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, Christian Morgenstern, Andrei Bely, Saul Bellow, and Joseph Beuys. Anthroposophy has given rise to successful and enduring alternative institutions in education, agriculture, health care, and other areas. Its best-known innovations include Waldorf schools, biodynamic farming, anthroposophical medicine, a type of expressive dance known as eurythmy, and a church called the Christian Community.⁶⁶ For anthroposophists, all of these disparate activities are expressions of a unified esoteric whole. These forms of anthroposophy in practice will play a key role in the chapters that follow.

Like other variants of esotericism, anthroposophy remains a controversial topic among scholars as well as practitioners. Some analysts have downplayed or denied the presence of racist and nationalist elements in Steiner's work, even while criticizing other aspects of that work. German studies scholar Perry Myers, for instance, insists that "Steiner was no racist."⁶⁷ Anthroposophists today continue to defend Steiner's racial and ethnic teachings, presenting them as humanitarian, tolerant, and enlightened.⁶⁸ There is much to be said for these interpretations; Steiner's thought

⁶⁶ While Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, anthroposophical medicine, and the Christian Community all receive substantial analysis here, I will address other form of anthroposophy only briefly, with little attention to Steiner's contributions to architecture or theater, for example. One important aspect of anthroposophy that does not form a significant part of this study is eurythmy, which anthroposophists view as a performative movement meant to cultivate spiritual harmonies. Steiner considered eurythmy an "art of the soul" suited to pedagogical and therapeutic purposes as well as public performance. See Rudolf Steiner, *Eurythmie als sichtbare Sprache* (Dornach: Philosophisch-anthroposophischer Verlag am Goetheanum, 1927) and Steiner, *Eurythmie als sichtbarer Gesang* (Dornach: Philosophisch-anthroposophischer Verlag am Goetheanum, 1927).

⁶⁷ Cf. Perry Myers, *The Double-Edged Sword: The Cult of Bildung, Its Downfall and Reconstitution in Fin-de-Siècle Germany (Rudolf Steiner and Max Weber)* (New York: Lang, 2004), 111-15, and Myers, "Colonial consciousness: Rudolf Steiner's Orientalism and German cultural identity" *Journal of European Studies* 36 (2006), 389-417, particularly 397-403. Though his interpretations sometimes differ strongly from my own, Myers 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." ("Colonial consciousness," 412)

⁶⁸ Major anthroposophist statements include Pietro Archiati, *Die Überwindung des Rassismus durch die Geisteswissenschaft Rudolf Steiners* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 1997); Bernard Nesfield-Cookson, "A Response to the Claim that Anthroposophy is Racist" in Sevak Gulbekian, ed., *The Future*

contains an important liberal strand, and an emphatic individualism forms a core part of anthroposophy, though Steiner's followers sometimes denied it during the Nazi era. According to Steiner, "ideals of race, nation and blood" were out of step with evolution.⁶⁹ Instead, "it is by Spiritual Science that culture – a spiritual culture – must be carried over the whole Earth, without distinction of race or blood."⁷⁰ As Steiner told his followers, "racial prejudice prevents us from seeing into a man's soul."⁷¹

Such cosmopolitan axioms are an integral feature of anthroposophy's esoteric perspective. But there is more to anthroposophical race doctrines than this. Non-anthroposophist observers often have difficulty overlooking the less appealing components of Steiner's worldview. Historian Philipp Blom describes 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

is Now: Anthroposophy at the Millennium (London: Temple Lodge, 1999), 174-88; *Anthroposophie und die Frage der Rassen: Zwischenbericht der niederländischen Untersuchungskommission* (Frankfurt: Info3, 2000); 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). Referring to the Archangel Michael, a central tenet of anthroposophical belief, Nesfield-Cookson writes: "Under the regency of Michael the principles of both nationalism and racism have ceased to be in harmony with the spirit of our age." ("A Response to the Claim that Anthroposophy is Racist," 179)

⁶⁹ Rudolf Steiner, *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1993), 186: "A fourteenth-century person who spoke of the ideals of race and nation would have been speaking in terms of the progressive tendencies of human evolution; someone who speaks of the ideal of race and nation and of tribal membership today is speaking of impulses which are part of the decline of humanity. If anyone now considers them to be progressive ideals to present to humanity, this is an untruth. Nothing is more designed to take humanity into its decline than the propagation of the ideals of race, nation, and blood. Nothing is more likely to prevent human progress than proclamations of national ideals belonging to earlier centuries which continue to be preserved by the luciferic and ahrimanic powers. The true ideal must arise from what we find in the world of the spirit, not in the blood."

⁷⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *Earthly and Cosmic Man* (Blauvelt: Spiritual Science Library, 1986), 158. See also Steiner, *Universe, Earth and Man* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1987), 158: "[I]n our own epoch the concept of race will gradually disappear along with all the differences that are relics of earlier times. Thus everything that exists today in connection with the races are relics of the differentiation that took place in Atlantean times. We can still speak of races but only in the sense that the real concept of races is losing its validity."

⁷¹ Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, 74.

of race during his hundreds of lectures throughout Germany.”⁷² Blom adds: “With its ideas of historic destiny and its racist overtones, Steiner’s teaching was congenial not only to those seeking a higher truth beyond rationality, but also to the thinking of men with a conservative German background.”⁷³ Different readers have thus come to very different conclusions about anthroposophy; for some, it is obvious that anthroposophy contains racist and nationalist ideas, and for others it is equally obvious that it does not. Both of these contrary points of view find substantial support in Steiner’s voluminous published works.⁷⁴

But the difficulties involved in reaching an adequate analysis of anthroposophy go beyond disagreements over racial politics. Anthroposophy often takes a dim view of intellectual examination, associating it with soulless materialism and dry abstraction. Steiner did not present his ideas primarily for intellectual understanding or investigation: “A man who would receive Anthroposophy with his intellect kills it in the very act.”⁷⁵ At the same time, anthroposophy claims the status of science rather

⁷² Philipp Blom, *The Vertigo Years: Europe, 1900-1914* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 355. Blom’s book, written for a popular audience, contains several errors on details regarding Steiner, but accurately notes that Steiner’s racial doctrines were “essentially a spiritual variant of evolutionism” (355). Blom also writes that Steiner offered “a vision of progress through struggle, culminating inevitably in the dominance of a Christian, European, Aryan and, more particularly, German civilization.” (214)

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 214. The German edition of the book is Philipp Blom, *Der taumelnde Kontinent: Europa 1900-1914* (Munich: Hanser, 2009); on Steiner and anthroposophy see 242-46 and the section “Rasse und Mystik,” 413-20.

⁷⁴ Steiner wrote dozens of books and gave thousands of lectures in the course of his life. Many of the lectures were transcribed and published in book form by his followers. The *Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe*, the official edition of his complete works, now totals nearly 400 volumes. When available, I will quote authorized English translations of Steiner’s writings and lectures; otherwise I will translate from the German editions. While the authenticity of Steiner’s lecture transcripts is not generally in doubt, there have been acrimonious intra-anthroposophical debates for decades over the textual integrity of some of them, including law suits between rival anthroposophist publishers. The available transcripts for lecture cycles before approximately 1910 often do not meet satisfactory standards, but are considered basically reliable by anthroposophists. 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 Rudolf Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1940), 13-14.

⁷⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *The Life, Nature and Cultivation of Anthroposophy* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1963), 15.

than religion, calling itself a “science of the spirit.” For anthroposophists, Steiner’s teachings “may be called occult science, theosophy, spiritual science, esotericism, or anthroposophy; the name is not of much importance.”⁷⁶ Even while claiming scientific vocabulary, Steiner proclaimed frankly religious goals:

The mission of the Spiritual Science Movement is to prepare those who have the will to allow themselves to be prepared, for the return of the Christ upon earth. This is the cosmo-historical significance of Spiritual Science, to prepare mankind and to keep its eyes open for the time when the Christ will appear again actively among men in the sixth cultural epoch [...] In order to be led to real Christianity, the men of the future will have to receive that spiritual teaching which Spiritual Science is able to give.⁷⁷

Steiner and his followers emphasized the contrast between their conception of spiritual science and standard scholarly approaches to knowledge and inquiry. This is particularly true of the discipline of history. Anthroposophist attitudes toward the very idea of professional historiography remain profoundly ambivalent. While seeking recognition from scholars of Western esotericism, many anthroposophists are outspokenly skeptical of the premises, goals, and methods of historical scholarship as a whole. One prominent anthroposophist rejected historiography because it is based merely on “sources” and “documents,” while real history takes place “in the supersensory spheres.”⁷⁸ Steiner himself held that “ordinary history,” which is

⁷⁶ “Introduction” to Rudolf Steiner, *Investigations in Occultism* (London: Putnam, 1920), 16. In a number of contexts Steiner used the terms “occultism,” “occult science,” “spiritual science” and “anthroposophy” more or less synonymously; cf. Adolf Baumann, *Wörterbuch der Anthroposophie* (Munich: mvg-Verlag, 1991), 92-97.

⁷⁷ Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John*, 189. The Christian elements within anthroposophy, while unorthodox, are central to its overall doctrines. Peter Clarke, *New Religions in Global Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2006) describes anthroposophy as a “Christian Occult group” (114). See also Roger Olson, “Rudolf Steiner, Esoteric Christianity, and the New Age Movement” *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religions and Cultures* 1 (1992), 341-53.

⁷⁸ Emil Bock, *Das Alte Testament und die Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1935), 8. Bock adds: “Und deshalb muß alle Geschichtsschreibung, mag sie auch auf noch so reichem ‘Quellenmaterial’ fußen, stümperhaft und blind bleiben, wenn sie sich nicht der Grundquelle bewußt ist, aus der alles geschichtliche Werden hervorströmt und immerfort gestaltet und gespeist wird: der übersinnlich-übergeschichtlichen Sphäre realer geistiger Wesenheiten.” See also Hans Erhard Lauer, *Geschichte als Stufengang der Menschwerdung: Ein Beitrag zu einer*

“limited to external evidence,” was no match for “direct spiritual perception.”⁷⁹ He described “the academic approach to historical research” as “absurd” because it ignored “supersensible knowledge.”⁸⁰ Steiner’s book *Occult History* reproaches the “inadequacy of the customary way of studying history,” which fails to grasp the supernatural causes behind events.⁸¹ In Steiner’s view, historical facts were merely superficial symptoms of spiritual forces operating in the higher worlds. Historical scholarship was thus illusory and pointless.⁸² Indeed “conventional history” constituted “a positive hindrance to occult research.”⁸³ For Steiner, “only a true understanding of mysticism, theosophy, and gnosis” could reveal what “materialistic” scholarship conceals.⁸⁴

Geschichtswissenschaft auf geisteswissenschaftlicher Grundlage (Freiburg: Novalis, 1956), and Lauer, *Die Wiederverkörperung des Menschen als Lebensgesetz der Geschichte* (Freiburg: Novalis, 1958); for more recent anthroposophist statements see Thomas Meyer, “Kampf gegen die Wahrheit über ein Kernstück europäischer Geschichte” *Der Europäer* September 2001, 7-15, and Andreas Ferch and Werner Schäfer, *Okkulte Geschichtsforschung* (Dresden: Zeitenwende, 2004).

⁷⁹ Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 37-38.

⁸⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *From Symptom to Reality in Modern History* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1976), 36.

⁸¹ Steiner, *Occult History*, 5; cf. Steiner, *From Symptom to Reality in Modern History*, 17-18: “[F]rom the standpoint of spiritual science what is usually called history must be seen as a complex of symptoms. From this point of view what is usually taught as history, the substance of what is called history in the scholastic world, does not touch upon the really vital questions in the evolutionary history of mankind; it deals only with superficial symptoms. We must penetrate beneath the surface phenomena and uncover the deeper layer of meaning in events and then the true reality behind the evolution of mankind will be revealed.”

⁸² Cf. Rudolf Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen: Das Karma der Unwahrhaftigkeit* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1983), 284: “Go to historical seminars as they exist today. What do they call historical criticism there? Simply digging out mere facts, facts that are available to the senses. By doing that one simply slides into Maya, the world of illusion.” Steiner goes on to ridicule “historical institutes” and “books of history,” and contrasts historical scholarship to “myths and legends,” condemning the former and promoting the latter. Instead of these merely external and superficial facts, Steiner urges his followers to direct their attention to the “mysteries” and “occult brotherhoods” and “cosmic forces” that lie behind the facade of history.

⁸³ Rudolf Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John and its Relation to the Other Gospels* (London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing Company, 1944), 23. According to Steiner, “history that is based on documental evidence” cannot provide the “objectivity and certainty” available through clairvoyance, and knowledge of “external history” will “disturb [the] vision” of occult researchers and “bias” their perception of the supersensible past. (ibid., 20-25) For a summary of Steiner’s approach to clairvoyant knowledge see Ludwig Deinhard, “Über das Lesen in der Akasha-Chronik” *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* November 1914, 217-22.

⁸⁴ Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 34. There are nonetheless several academic historians who are anthroposophists or active sympathizers of anthroposophy, including Kevin Dann in the US and Jörn Rüsen in Germany.

The disparity between historical research and anthroposophy's self-understanding as an alternative path to higher knowledge complicates any effort to analyze Steiner's teachings and his movement's past. The notion of timeless spiritual truths available to the initiated is central to much of the esoteric milieu and poses significant obstacles to external inquiry. Textual sources are an especially fraught matter; some anthroposophists hold that quotation is contrary to the spirit of Steiner's work. Others simply point to alternative passages from Steiner's prodigious array of publications which seem to refute any particular text a historian might cite. More fundamentally, the idea of Steiner as a historical figure whose work was shaped by its historical contexts directly conflicts with basic anthroposophical assumptions. Steiner's followers are generally inclined to view his teachings as a special form of knowledge revealed from the higher worlds, essentially incomparable to mundane knowledge formed in this world.⁸⁵

These dilemmas are amplified in the case of anthroposophical beliefs about race and ethnicity, themes which are intimately intertwined in Steiner's work. Public accusations of racism have dogged the anthroposophist movement in Germany and elsewhere since the 1990s, and anthroposophists have often expressed frustration at what they view as incomprehension and selective indignation toward their founder's statements from a century ago.⁸⁶ The problem is compounded for English-speaking readers, as a number of current translations of Steiner's published works have been bowdlerized, with the more conspicuous instances of racist and ethnocentric content

⁸⁵ Cf. Ahern, *Sun at Midnight*, 183: For Steiner's followers, "Anthroposophy's fit with Western esotericism and turn of the century German culture has to be interpreted as confirmation of Steiner's world outlook, for it is considered 'Ahrimanic' to suggest that the doctrines he revealed were in part at least conditioned by his time."

⁸⁶ For one of many examples see "Racism Charges in Europe" *Anthroposophy Worldwide* May 2000, 3-4. This statement 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)

surreptitiously excised.⁸⁷ In light of the contradictions built in to Steiner's evolving racial and ethnic doctrines, any analysis must inevitably make difficult choices about which facets to emphasize. One principal consideration in this regard is the state of existing scholarship on the topic. With several significant exceptions, much of what has been written about anthroposophical race thinking and Steiner's views on national questions has had a notably sympathetic and forgiving tenor, which has sometimes presented an impediment to critical historical investigation.⁸⁸ This study will concentrate primarily on the aspects of anthroposophy's racial theory that have received less scholarly scrutiny.

In order to understand anthroposophical race doctrines historically, it is helpful to take a dynamic view of the development of Steiner's ideas on the subject, an approach which conflicts fundamentally with anthroposophical self-conceptions. Steiner's academic background in the natural sciences and theosophy's stated aim of reconciling science and spirituality are both important in such an analysis. Steiner constructed his ideas on race and ethnicity in interaction with his social and

⁸⁷ In the current edition of *Universe, Earth and Man*, for example, all of the references to "the black race," "the Malayan Race," "the Mongolian race" and "the American Indians" as "degenerate races" have been deleted, with no notice to the reader (88-89); for comparison see the previous translation (Steiner, *Universe, Earth and Man*, London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing Company, 1941) or the original (Steiner, *Welt, Erde und Mensch*, Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1930). Both of the English translations of Steiner's book *Über Gesundheit und Krankheit* omit the paragraph on "Negro novels" which I examine in the next chapter; cf. Steiner, *Health and Illness* (Spring Valley: Anthroposophic Press, 1981), and Steiner, *From Comets to Cocaine* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2000). In some cases entire lectures have been deleted. Steiner's 1924 lecture on "The Essence of Jewry" was omitted from the otherwise complete English translation of the book it appeared in; compare Steiner, "Vom Wesen des Judentums" in Steiner, *Die Geschichte der Menschheit und die Weltanschauungen der Kulturvölker* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1968), 179-196, to Steiner, *From Beetroot to Buddhism* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1999). Steiner's 1923 lecture on "Color and the Races of Humankind" was similarly omitted from the otherwise complete English translation of the book it appeared in; compare Steiner, "Farbe und Menschenrassen" in Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1993), 52-68, to Steiner, *From Limestone to Lucifer* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1999).

⁸⁸ Three dissertations devoted to Steiner bear this out: Marya Foley, "Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy of History" (PhD dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1981); Ursula Marcum, "Rudolf Steiner: An Intellectual Biography" (PhD dissertation, University of California – Riverside, 1989); Stephen Sagarin, "Promise and Compromise: A history of Waldorf schools in the United States, 1928-1998" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2004).

intellectual environment, and in response to specific historical and political contexts. These ideas did not simply flow directly from a seamless worldview that emerged full-fledged from Steiner's head, but were shaped through ongoing engagement with a variety of spiritual, scientific, and popular perspectives on race current at the time. Steiner's racial teachings also frequently echo notions elaborated by earlier German thinkers such as Kant, Blumenbach, and Hegel, and in some ways his vision of the eventual elimination of racial and ethnic difference harks back to classic Enlightenment themes.⁸⁹ Anthroposophical race thinking is nonetheless unmistakably esoteric in character and shares many features with other versions of occult racial thought. Steiner claimed that his statements on race were derived from his own "inner mystical experience" and reported spiritual truths from the higher worlds.⁹⁰

Anthroposophy's race doctrines center on a theory of racial evolution that is directly correlated to spiritual evolution. Steiner posited a hierarchy of racial forms 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. According to this theory, 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 racial levels, while souls that have progressed further incarnate in an advanced race, that is, in the bodies of racial and ethnic groups that have progressed further evolutionarily. Anthroposophy's conception of the spirit of the

⁸⁹ For useful excerpts of primary sources in translation from Kant, Blumenbach, Hegel, and others see Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lott, eds., *The Idea of Race* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000). For background see Sara Eigen and Mark Larrimore, eds., *The German Invention of Race* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

⁹⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1985), 135.

race and the soul of the nation are an important part of this theory; 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.

At the same time, anthroposophy looks askance at what Steiner termed “national chauvinism,” viewing it as an obstacle to spiritual progress. As Steiner put it in 1920: “And it is national chauvinism that is ringing through the whole civilized world today. This is merely the social counterpart of the utterly reactionary world-view that tries to trace everything back to inherited characteristics.”⁹¹ Steiner condemned “one-sided nationalism” in many of his works, explaining that individuals who maintain a living connection to the soul of their nation will not fall prey to chauvinism but will instead develop a healthy relationship with their own people and its particular capacities and tasks.⁹² He deemed national chauvinism a hindrance to objectivity, and presented his own standpoint as an objective one, uninfluenced by any national leanings. The historical background to these anthroposophical ideas is, however, considerably more complicated; Steiner’s perspective was itself embedded in a series of nationalist assumptions about the spiritual mission of Germany. This dynamic, a central point in the analysis to follow, is for the most part vehemently denied by anthroposophists today.⁹³ But appeals to brotherhood and international

⁹¹ Rudolf Steiner, *The New Spirituality and the Christ Experience of the Twentieth Century* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1988), 112. Steiner here associates nationalism with “foolish Wilsonian formulas” (115) and specifically mentions the Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, French, English, and Poles, but not Germans.

⁹² See e.g. Rudolf Steiner, *Anthroposophie als Kosmosophie* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1981), 105. For anthroposophist analyses of Steiner’s views on nationalism see Karl Heyer, ed., *Rudolf Steiner über den Nationalismus: Geisteswissenschaftliche Hinweise* (Basel: Perseus, 1993), and Christoph Lindenberg, “Rudolf Steiner und die geistige Aufgabe Deutschlands” *Die Drei: Zeitschrift für Anthroposophie* December 1989, 880-905.

⁹³ On the rare occasions when anthroposophists have ventured a mildly critical historical perspective on Steiner’s Germanocentrism, they have encountered intense hostility from their fellow anthroposophists, even the more liberal and historically informed among them. For an instructive example see Michael Loeckle, “Anmerkungen zu Rudolf Steiners Deutschland-Rezeption” *Jahrbuch für anthroposophische Kritik* 1996, 143-48, perhaps the most perceptive anthroposophist analysis of the topic, and the extremely aggressive reply by Jens Heisterkamp, “Steiner als Überwinder des Nationalismus – Eine Antwort auf Michael Loeckle” in *ibid.*, 149-53.

fraternity, compromised as they may have been by underlying ethnocentric beliefs, were a genuine part of anthroposophical discourse from the beginning, and these elements help explain why some right-wing political groups and some Nazis considered anthroposophy unpalatable and subversive.

This study will explore these themes in depth, while necessarily giving reduced attention to other topics in anthroposophy's history.⁹⁴ My analysis endeavors above all to address a significant lacuna in the existing literature while building on the pioneering work of several colleagues. Historical scholarship on anthroposophy has been greatly advanced by recent research from German historian Helmut Zander. His enormously detailed and carefully nuanced account of the movement's origins and early development, published in a two-volume book in 2007, provides historians and other scholars with an optimal basis for further investigation.⁹⁵ The exceedingly aggravated anthroposophist reactions to Zander's *Anthroposophie in Deutschland* indicate the gap that still separates internal and external perspectives on anthroposophy.⁹⁶ By the same token, the review of the book in the venerable *Historische Zeitschrift* marks a noteworthy instance of the sometimes feckless

⁹⁴ Important subjects that I have largely neglected include the role of gender and the status of women in the anthroposophist movement, the social composition and class background of the anthroposophical membership, its predominantly Protestant background, and the extensive connections between anthroposophy and the *Jugendbewegung* or German youth movement.

⁹⁵ Helmut Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007). The two volumes total over 1900 pages. For a thorough appraisal of the book see my review in *Aries* 10 (2010), 107-16.

⁹⁶ Zander's study has provoked two book-length rebuttals by anthroposophists: Karen Swassjan, *Aufgearbeitete Anthroposophie: Bilanz einer Geisterfahrt* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 2007), and Lorenzo Ravagli, *Zanders Erzählungen: Eine kritische Analyse des Werkes "Anthroposophie in Deutschland"* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2009). Further indignant anthroposophist responses include Andreas Neider, "Koloss auf tönernen Füßen - Helmut Zanders opus magnum" *Mitteilungen aus der anthroposophischen Arbeit in Deutschland* September 2007, 1-2; Thomas Meyer, "Helmut Zander und sein dilettantischer Wissenschaftsbegriff" *Der Europäer* October 2007, 3-8; Günter Röscher, "Anthroposophie aus skeptizistischer Sicht: Zu Helmut Zanders Darstellung ihrer Entstehung" *Die Drei* October 2007, 33-41; Jörg Ewertowski, "Der bestrittene geschichtliche Sinn. Helmut Zanders Studie 'Anthroposophie in Deutschland' in ihrem historistischen Kontext" *Anthroposophie* Weihnachten 2007, 292-304; Jörg Ewertowski, "Die Anthroposophie und der Historismus" in Karl-Martin Dietz, ed., *Esoterik verstehen: Anthroposophische und akademische Esoterikforschung* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 2008), 82-123.

response by the mainstream of the historical profession to scholarship on Western esoteric currents.⁹⁷ Zander's general history of anthroposophy in Germany in the first half of the twentieth century offers a framework for the following analysis of anthroposophy's relation to Nazism and Fascism. The Nazi era receives relatively cursory attention in Zander's book, but many of its arguments can be fruitfully extended to a more thorough consideration of the topic. The history of anthroposophy in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy can be seen, from this vantage point, as a paradigmatic example of the encounter between occultism and fascism.

If the difficulties in defining occultism have proven troublesome, they are no less so in the case of fascism, a concept which continues to elude a clear scholarly consensus.⁹⁸ For many historians, German National Socialism and Italian Fascism are the two chief forms of a broader political phenomenon known as fascism, and I will follow that convention here, though it has been challenged in thoughtful ways by other scholars who point out the *sui generis* nature of Nazism.⁹⁹ Even while recognizing the

⁹⁷ See the review of *Anthroposophie in Deutschland* by anthroposophist philosopher Karen Swassjan in *Historische Zeitschrift* 287 (2008), 795-96. Within the anthroposophical milieu, Swassjan has worked to rehabilitate the 'Conservative Revolution' and related thinkers while criticizing more liberal variants of anthroposophy. His *Historische Zeitschrift* review, essentially a synopsis of his book-length polemic against Zander, is a representative sample of anthroposophist outrage at the very notion that historians might study anthroposophy without following Steiner's own principles. While other anthroposophical responses to Zander's work have been less aggrieved, many anthroposophists resist treating anthroposophy as an object of scholarly study, insisting instead that it be recognized as a science in its own right, whose methods must be adhered to.

⁹⁸ Cf. the varying perspectives in Mark Neocleous, *Fascism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Kevin Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Knopf, 2004); Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Roger Griffin, *A Fascist Century* (London: Palgrave, 2008).

⁹⁹ For recent overviews of the main contending positions see Arnd Bauerkämper, "A New Consensus? Recent Research on Fascism in Europe, 1918-1945" *History Compass* 4 (2006), 536-66; Enzo Traverso, "Interpreting Fascism: Mosse, Sternhell and Gentile in Comparative Perspective" *Constellations* 15 (2008), 303-19; and Constantin Iordachi, ed., *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2010). An excellent review of the literature can be found in Sven Reichardt, "Was mit dem Faschismus passiert ist. Ein Literaturbericht zur internationalen Faschismusforschung seit 1990" *Neue politische Literatur* 49 (2004), 385-406. Relevant historical background is available in Eugen Weber, *Varieties of Fascism* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1964); Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (New York: Holt, 1965); F.L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982);

commonalities between Nazism and Italian Fascism, however, a central finding of this study is that the Nazi and Fascist regimes responded in significantly different ways to occult movements and ideas. Such contrasts had as much to do with the different shape that anthroposophy took in these two national contexts as they did with general differences between the two forms of fascist rule.¹⁰⁰ Indeed the research assembled here demonstrates that neither regime pursued a consistent or unified policy toward esoteric groups; Nazi officials and Fascist functionaries displayed a wide variety of attitudes to occultist undertakings, some positive, some negative, many ambivalent.

The rise of fascist political tendencies raises challenging questions for any history of twentieth century European esotericism. Just as the theme of modernity remains problematic for scholars of occultism, so it does for scholars of fascism; in both instances, modern and anti-modern moments are entangled in occasionally obscure ways. In a potentially fruitful parallel with newer research on the occult, recent scholarship on fascism has analyzed it as an alternative form of modernity which aimed to supplant what fascists saw as decadent versions of modernity in its

Gustavo Corni, *Fascismo e fascismi* (Rome: Riuniti, 1989); Enzo Collotti, *Fascismo, Fascismi* (Milan: Sansoni, 1994); Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (New York: Penguin, 1997); Wolfgang Wippermann, *Faschismustheorien* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1997); Philip Morgan, *Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945* (London: Routledge, 2003); Arnd Bauerkämper, *Der Faschismus in Europa 1918–1945* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2006); R.J.B. Bosworth, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). In standard usage, ‘fascism’ refers to the broad spectrum of fascist movements, parties, and ideologies, while ‘Fascism’ refers to the Italian case.

¹⁰⁰ For context see Gustavo Corni, “State and Society: Italy and Germany Compared” in Bosworth, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, 279–95; Karl Dietrich Bracher and Leo Valiani, *Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1991); Tim Mason, *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Richard Bessel, ed., *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: Comparisons and Contrasts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); MacGregor Knox, *Common Destiny: Dictatorship, Foreign Policy, and War in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Aristotle Kallis, *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922–1945* (London: Routledge, 2000); Alexander De Grand, *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: The ‘Fascist’ Style of Rule* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Sven Reichardt and Armin Nolzen, eds., *Faschismus in Italien und Deutschland: Studien zu Transfer und Vergleich* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005); MacGregor Knox, *To the Threshold of Power, 1922/33: Origins and Dynamics of the Fascist and National Socialist Dictatorships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Maurizio Bach and Stefan Breuer, *Faschismus als Bewegung und Regime: Italien und Deutschland im Vergleich* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010).

liberal or traditional form.¹⁰¹ In this process, nascent fascist movements often drew on discourses from both left and right, invoking progressive as well as reactionary models of social life, while championing a vision of national rebirth and regeneration.¹⁰²

Apocalyptic and millenarian tropes were common. From this perspective, fascism can

¹⁰¹ See Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*; Roger Griffin, "Modernity, modernism, and fascism. A 'mazeway resynthesis'" *Modernism/modernity* 15 (2008), 9-24; Daniel Woodley, "Fascism, rationality and modernity" in Woodley, *Fascism and Political Theory: Critical Perspectives on Fascist Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2010), 21-48; Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism* (Westport: Praeger, 2003); Riccardo Bavaj, *Die Ambivalenz der Moderne im Nationalsozialismus: Eine Bilanz der Forschung* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003); Domenico Settembrini, "Fascismo e modernità" in Alessandro Campi, ed., *Che cos'è il fascismo? Interpretazioni e prospettive di ricerca* (Rome: Ideazione, 2003), 375-406; Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Federico Finchelstein, "On Fascist Ideology" *Constellations* 15 (2008), 320-31. For further context cf. Stanley Payne, "Fascism and Modernization" in Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 471-86; Mark Roseman, "National Socialism and Modernisation" in Bessel, ed., *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, 197-229; Barrington Moore, "Fascism as the Heritage of Conservative Modernization" in Gilbert Allardyce, ed., *The Place of Fascism in European History* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 127-43; A. James Gregor, *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Hans Mommsen, "Nationalsozialismus als vorgetäuschte Modernisierung" in Walter Pehle, ed., *Der Historische Ort des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1990), 31-46; Norbert Frei, "Wie modern war der Nationalsozialismus?" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 19 (1993), 367-87; Axel Schildt, "NS-Regime, Modernisierung und Moderne: Anmerkungen zur Hochkunjunktur einer andauernden Diskussion" *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 23 (1994), 3-22; Emilio Gentile, "The Conquest of Modernity: From Modernist Nationalism to Fascism" *Modernism/Modernity* 1 (1994), 55-87; Michael Prinz and Rainer Zitelmann, eds., *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994); Walter Grode, *Nationalsozialistische Moderne: Rassenideologische Modernisierung durch Abtrennung und Zerstörung gesellschaftlicher Peripherien* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1994); Jeffrey Herf, "Reactionary Modernism Reconsidered: Modernity, the West and the Nazis" in Zeev Sternhell, ed., *The Intellectual Revolt against Liberal Democracy 1870-1945* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1996), 131-58; Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Peter Fritzsche, "Nazi Modern" *Modernism/Modernity* 3 (1996), 1-22; David Roberts, "How not to Think about Fascism and Ideology, Intellectual Antecedents and Historical Meaning" *Journal of Contemporary History* 35 (2000), 185-211; Paul Betts, "The New Fascination with Fascism: The Case of Nazi Modernism" *Journal of Contemporary History* 37 (2002), 541-58; Edward Ross Dickinson, "Biopolitics, Fascism, Democracy: Some Reflections on Our Discourse About 'Modernity'" *Central European History* 37 (2004), 1-48; Young-sun Hong, "Neither singular nor alternative: Narratives of modernity and welfare in Germany, 1870-1945" *Social History* 30 (2005), 133-53; Mark Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909-1939* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Entfernte Verwandtschaft: Faschismus, Nationalsozialismus, New Deal 1933-1939* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2008); Zeev Sternhell, "How to Think about Fascism and its Ideology" *Constellations* 15 (2008), 280-90.

¹⁰² Cf. Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993); Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo: Storia e interpretazione* (Rome: Laterza, 2002); Stefan Breuer, *Nationalismus und Faschismus: Frankreich, Italien und Deutschland im Vergleich* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005); Emilio Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology 1918 - 1925* (New York: Enigma, 2005).

be seen as a product of ‘the crisis of classical modernity.’¹⁰³ Even with these recent advances in scholarship, historians need to do a better job of showing “that fascism is nuanced and complex, and that its appeal went deeper than we are usually willing to admit, and in different directions.”¹⁰⁴

The most infamous and most thoroughly studied fascist regime is undoubtedly the National Socialist party-state that ruled Germany from 1933 to 1945. This is, for better or worse, where most of the speculation and most of the scholarship on the relations between occultism and fascism have been directed. One reason for the persistence of beliefs about ‘Nazi occultism’ may be that it is tempting to see Nazism as an otherwise inexplicable eruption of evil whose origins must somehow be traced to shadowy and malevolent forces.¹⁰⁵ A more promising approach, from a historical perspective, is to view both Nazism and occultism as movements and worldviews which intersected, converged, and diverged in various ways under shifting political circumstances. Though their influence has often been exaggerated, there were several

¹⁰³ See Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992); cf. Peukert, “Nazi Germany and the pathologies and dislocations of modernity” in Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (London: Batsford, 1987), 243-49. For varying reflections on the simultaneous co-existence of modern and anti-modern dynamics see David Schoenbaum, *Hitler’s Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany 1933-1939* (New York: Doubleday, 1966); Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (New York: Doubleday, 1967); Arno Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (New York: Pantheon, 1981); Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Wolfgang Mommsen, *Der autoritäre Nationalstaat: Verfassung, Gesellschaft und Kultur des deutschen Kaiserreiches* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1990); Eric Wolf, “National Socialist Germany” in Wolf, *Envisioning Power: Ideologies of Dominance and Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 197-273; Thomas Rohkrämer, “Antimodernism, Reactionary Modernism and National Socialism: Technocratic Tendencies in Germany, 1890–1945” *Contemporary European History* 8 (1999), 29-50; Georg Bollenbeck, *Tradition, Avantgarde, Reaktion: Deutsche Kontroversen um die kulturelle Moderne, 1880–1945* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1999). Griffin’s *Modernism and Fascism* draws an important distinction between ‘modernity’ and ‘modernism’ which I have not reflected here. Griffin also gives extended attention to occultism; see e.g. 15-17, 122-24, 130-41, 255-60.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 7.

¹⁰⁵ For a judicious appraisal of popular enthusiasm for the ‘Nazi occultism’ thesis see Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, “The Nazi Mysteries” in Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 107-27.

strands of occult thought that received a sympathetic reception in some of the upper echelons of the Nazi hierarchy. A positive interest in esoteric teachings often coincided with the neo-pagan inclinations of certain Nazi leaders.¹⁰⁶ While it lies beyond the scope of this study, further research on these little-understood connections could help clarify the historical details involved.

The three best-known examples of high-level Nazis who were open to various occult ideas are Alfred Rosenberg, nominally the chief ideologist of the Nazi party; Rudolf Hess, the Deputy of the Führer and titular head of the party; and Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS. Rosenberg's support for esoteric worldviews was capricious at best, and he often opposed forms of occultism which he considered incompatible with National Socialism.¹⁰⁷ Hess came to play a crucial role in protecting anthroposophist projects in particular. Himmler, with much more effective power at his disposal, followed a dual strategy of suppressing some occult movements while incorporating others into his own SS empire.¹⁰⁸ A number of occultists were employed

¹⁰⁶ For background on neo-paganism cf. Richard Faber and Renate Schlesier, eds., *Die Restauration der Götter: Antike Religion und Neo-Paganismus* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1986); Stefanie von Schnurbein, *Religion als Kulturkritik: Neugermanisches Heidentum im 20. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1992); Andreas Speit, "Esoterik und Neuheidentum: Historische Allianzen und aktuelle Tendenzen" in Jens Mecklenburg, ed., *Handbuch deutscher Rechtsextremismus* (Berlin: Elefant, 1996), 709-32; Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Hubert Cancik and Uwe Puschner, eds., *Antisemitismus, Paganismus, Völkische Religion* (Munich: Saur, 2004); Harald Baer, "Neugermanisches Heidentum" in Baer, ed., *Lexikon neureligiöser Gruppen, Szenen und Weltanschauungen* (Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 872-81; René Gründer, *Germanisches (Neu-) Heidentum in Deutschland* (Berlin: Logos, 2008).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. the deprecating parenthetical reference to Besant and Steiner in Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Hoheneichen, 1930), 49. On the presence of occult ideas in Rosenberg's thought see Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, 313-18.

¹⁰⁸ On Himmler's occult interests see Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, 318-25; Franz Wegener, *Heinrich Himmler: Deutscher Spiritismus, französischer Okkultismus und der Reichsführer SS* (Gladbeck: Kulturförderverein Ruhrgebiet, 2004); and Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler: Biographie* (Munich: Siedler, 2008), 285-96. Longerich argues persuasively that Himmler was fascinated throughout his life with occult themes, believed in them sincerely, and at times devoted substantial SS resources to them, but never explicitly or publicly formulated his own beliefs on the topic and generally kept them protected from external view. For an informative but flawed popular overview of Nazi interest in the occult see Rüdiger Sünner, *Schwarze Sonne: Entfesselung und Mißbrauch der Mythen im Nationalsozialismus und rechter Esoterik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1999), 28-124. Sünner, whose perspective on anthroposophy is notably sympathetic, does not examine the contributions of Steiner and his

by the *Ahnenerbe*, an SS outfit dedicated to research on the presumed Teutonic and Aryan ancestors of the German people; the *Ahnenerbe* preoccupation with prehistory and mythology fit well with occultist predilections.¹⁰⁹ The *Ahnenerbe* also witnessed clashes among rival occult tendencies, with figures such as Herman Wirth, first president of the organization, facing off with would-be occult seers like Karl Maria Wiligut.¹¹⁰ Beyond instances such as these, occult claims sometimes found a congenial hearing within Nazi ranks, whether the ‘cosmic ice theory’ of Hans Hörbiger or Wirth’s esoteric tales of Atlantis and Aryans.¹¹¹

Adolf Hitler’s attitude toward occultism is a more controversial matter. The evidence is conflicting, and it is difficult to determine the extent to which he may have taken an interest in some varieties of occult thought, but over-eager depictions of

followers to the book’s central themes. A perceptive critique of his work is available in Bernd Sösemann, “Audiovisuelle Assoziationen: Anmerkungen zur Deutung der völkisch-nationalsozialistischen Vorstellungen im Film ‘Schwarze Sonne’” in Uwe Puschner and Ulrich Großmann, eds., *Völkisch und national: Zur Aktualität alter Denkmuster im 21. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), 341-53.

¹⁰⁹ More research is needed on the role of occult beliefs within the *Ahnenerbe*. The standard study of the organization is Michael Kater, *Das “Ahnenerbe” der SS 1935-1945: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1974). Cf. Reinhard Greve, “Tibetforschung im SS-Ahnenerbe” in Thomas Hauschild, ed., *Lebenslust und Fremdenfurcht: Ethnologie im Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995), 168-99, and 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.

¹¹⁰ As with so many other aspects of occultism in Nazi contexts, Wiligut’s stature is often overstated. For salutary perspective see Junginger, “From Buddha to Adolf Hitler,” 154-55; Junginger argues that occultist influence within the *Ahnenerbe* was marginal. Further background is available in Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 265-308, and in Goodrick-Clarke’s fine analysis of Wiligut in *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, 177-91.

¹¹¹ Cf. Brigitte Nagel, “Die Welteislehre: Ihre Geschichte und ihre Bedeutung im ‘Dritten Reich’” in Christoph Meinel and Peter Voswinckel, eds., *Medizin, Naturwissenschaft, Technik und Nationalsozialismus: Kontinuitäten und Diskontinuitäten* (Stuttgart: Verlag für Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Technik, 1994), 166-72; Christina Wessely, “Karriere einer Weltanschauung: Die Welteislehre 1894-1945” *Zeitgeschichte* 33 (2006), 25-39; Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, 321-33; Doering-Manteuffel, *Das Okkulte*, 209-11; Junginger, ed., *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*, 114-22, 163-70; Luitgard Löw, “Völkische Deutungen prähistorischer Sinnbilder: Herman Wirth und sein Umfeld” in Puschner and Großmann, eds., *Völkisch und national*, 214-32; 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.

Hitler as an avid occultist are untenable.¹¹² Historians have noted Hitler's diatribes against occult sects and his contempt for aspiring esoteric prophets.¹¹³ The question of Hitler's early intellectual debt to occult thinkers has also generated substantial discussion. Some hold that he inherited his racial views largely from ariosophy, and have even designated the ariosophist Lanz von Liebenfels as "the man who gave Hitler his ideas."¹¹⁴ These claims are typically inflated, but the young Hitler was exposed to ariosophical ideas, and they left traces on his thinking.¹¹⁵ Other observers have discerned notable parallels between some of Hitler's racial pronouncements and the root-race theories of theosophy.¹¹⁶ These similarities may not be due to direct influence, however; they may instead reflect shared ideological roots or common cultural sources and assumptions, and indicate just how widespread such ideas were in the early decades of the twentieth century.

In contrast to approaches focused on possible ariosophical influences on Nazi ideology, and on famous figures like Hitler and Himmler and their ostensible occult

¹¹² See the somewhat credulous treatment by Raymond Sickinger, "Hitler and the Occult: The Magical Thinking of Adolf Hitler" *Journal of Popular Culture* 34 (2000), 107-25. For a representative popular presentation see Peter Orzechowski, "Adolf und die Alraune: Okkulte Nazis" *Transatlantik* October 1983, 54-56.

¹¹³ Cf. Michael Reißmann, *Hitlers Gott: Vorsehungsglaube und Sendungsbewusstsein des deutschen Diktators* (Zurich: Pendo, 2001), 113-72.

¹¹⁴ Wilfried Daim, *Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab* (Munich: Isar, 1958); cf. Sydney Jones, *Hitler in Vienna, 1907-1913* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), 116-26, 296-302. For an early version of the young-Hitler-as-occultist claim see Josef Greiner, *Das Ende des Hitler-Mythos* (Vienna: Amalthea, 1947), 88-93.

¹¹⁵ See the careful reconstruction by Goodrick-Clarke, "Ariosophy and Adolf Hitler" in Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, 192-204; cf. Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die deutsche Diktatur* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969), 65-66, 87; Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews 1933 - 1945* (New York: Bantam, 1976), 10-12, 85-86; Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 205-22, 225-27, 350-53; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York: Norton, 1999), 49-52; Reißmann, *Hitlers Gott*, 119-24, 248-50.

¹¹⁶ James Webb, for example, claimed that Himmler's thinking was "thoroughly imbued with Theosophical tenets" (Webb, *The Occult Underground*, 104). Referring to the questionable memoirs of Hermann Rauschning, Webb also wrote: "If we accept Rauschning, then there is absolutely no doubt that Hitler believed in a theory of occult evolution of a Theosophical type" (Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, 313). Eduard Gugenberger and Roman Schweidlenka, *Mutter Erde - Magie und Politik: Zwischen Faschismus und neuer Gesellschaft* (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1987), 105 posit a "decisive influence" of the root-race doctrine on National Socialism.

leanings, this study will explore the ways in which ‘mainstream’ esoteric organizations and worldviews interacted with various components of the Nazi state in concrete situations. This requires a more expansive conception of the cultural and political setting than is usually brought to bear on the study of occultism. Several of the initiatives examined in the following chapters are not immediately identifiable as ‘occult’ activities, in part because their proponents endeavored to minimize their esoteric affiliations in the public eye. There is no necessary reason why projects such as Waldorf schools, biodynamic farming, or anthroposophical medicine need to be considered under the rubric of occultism; alternative educational institutions, alternative agricultural techniques, alternative health care methods and even alternative spiritualities can be assessed on their own terms, without reference to their occult underpinnings. My argument, however, is that the fate of many of these enterprises during the Nazi era can be better understood by taking into account the esoteric dimension that was fundamental to their founders. This involves a closer look at the multifarious ties connecting occult tendencies to contemporaneous trends.

In German contexts, the historical intersection between occultism and fascism was facilitated by and complicated by an intricate series of links and overlaps with two other social-cultural sectors, the *Lebensreform* milieu and the *völkisch* milieu. *Lebensreform* or ‘lifestyle reform’ refers to an assortment of alternative movements which came to prominence in the Wilhelmine and Weimar periods, including back to the land efforts and communal experiments, nutritional reform proposals, natural healing methods, vegetarian and animal protection societies, and related projects.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ See Wolfgang Krabbe, *Gesellschaftsveränderung durch Lebensreform: Strukturmerkmale einer sozialreformerischen Bewegung im Deutschland der Industrialisierungsperiode* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974); Janos Frecot, “Die Lebensreformbewegung” in Klaus Vondung, ed., *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum: Zur Sozialgeschichte seiner Ideen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 138-52; 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);

The plethora of *völkisch* groups cultivated a mixture of Romantic nationalism, ethnic revivalism, anti-socialism and anti-capitalism, and generally promoted antisemitic and racist convictions as part of a hoped-for Germanic renewal.¹¹⁸ Historians have recognized for some time the extensive crossover among *Lebensreform*, *völkisch*, and occult circles, both in terms of ideology and in terms of personnel, but there is little consensus on how to interpret or explain this factor.¹¹⁹ In some ways, the

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; Florentine Fritzen, *Gesünder Leben: Die Lebensreformbewegung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006).

¹¹⁸ Cf. 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 Völkischen in Deutschland: Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008).

¹¹⁹ Compare George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964); Ekkehard Hieronimus, "Dualismus und Gnosis in der völkischen Bewegung" in Jacob Taubes, ed., *Gnosis und Politik* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1984), 82-89; Helmut Möller and Ellic Howe, *Merlin Peregrinus: Vom Untergrund des Abendlandes* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1986); Martin Green, *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins, Ascona, 1900-1920* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1986); Jost Hermand, *Der alte Traum vom neuen Reich: Völkische Utopien und Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1988; English translation: Hermand, *Old Dreams of a New Reich: Volkish Utopias and National Socialism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Corona Hepp, *Avantgarde: Moderne Kunst, Kulturkritik und Reformbewegungen nach der Jahrhundertwende* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992); Gangolf Hübinger, "Der Verlag Eugen Diederichs in Jena: Wissenschaftskritik, Lebensreform und völkische Bewegung" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22 (1996), 31-45; Bernd Wedemeyer, "'Zum Licht': Die Freikörperkultur in der Wilhelminischen Ära und der Weimarer Republik zwischen völkischer Bewegung, Okkultismus und Neuheidentum" *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 81 (1999), 173-97; Bernd Wedemeyer-Kolwe, "'Umgang mit dem Zwischenreich': Die Lebensreformer Walter Fränzel und Herbert Fritsche" in Judith Baumgartner and Bernd Wedemeyer-Kolwe, eds., *Aufbrüche, Seitenpfade, Abwege: Suchbewegungen und Subkulturen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 81-89; Wedemeyer-Kolwe, "Der neue Mensch": Körperkultur im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004); Oliver Piecha, "Das Weltbild eines deutschen Diätarztes: Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis zwischen Lebensreform und völkischem Fundamentalismus" in Sabine Kruse and Jürgen-Wolfgang Goette, eds., *Von Ascona bis Eden: Alternative Lebensformen* (Lübeck: Erich-Mühsam-Gesellschaft, 2006), 118-58; Felix Wiedemann, "Völkische Esoterik" in Wiedemann, *Rassenmutter und Rebellin: Hexenbilder in Romantik, völkischer Bewegung, Neuheidentum und Feminismus* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), 140-50; Ulrich Linse, "Völkisch-rassische Siedlungen der Lebensreform" in Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, eds., *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung'*, 397-410; Uwe Puschner, "Lebensreform und völkische Weltanschauung" in Buchholz, ed., *Die Lebensreform*, 175-78; Helmut Zander, "Theosophie und Anthroposophie" in *ibid.*, 433-36; Doering-Manteuffel, *Das Okkulte*, 193-228.

anthroposophical movement represented a confluence of all three elements. Steiner and his followers partook of the broad stream of early twentieth century German reform movements that combined a social message of brotherhood and harmony with themes of race mysticism and national messianism.

In part because of its engagement with other movements, anthroposophy enjoyed an enviable status within the modern German occult revival. A like-minded observer from abroad recalled the period after World War One: “in Germany after the war, it was almost impossible not to hear the name of Rudolf Steiner.”¹²⁰ In 1928 a prominent anthroposophist declared that anthroposophy was the “spiritual leader” in the realm of occultism.¹²¹ After 1933 anthroposophy’s success was also, in a sense, its downfall. Nazi officials who were suspicious of esoteric groups begrudged anthroposophists their cozy relationship with other Nazis sympathetic to Waldorf schools or biodynamic farming or anthroposophical medicine. The tug-of-war between pro-anthroposophical and anti-anthroposophical factions within the party and state lasted until 1941, when anthroposophist activities fell victim to an all-out Nazi campaign against occultism. The complex dynamics at work in this process were easily misunderstood. A contemporary admirer of Steiner remarked in 1935 that anthroposophy was “entirely opposed” to Nazism, and vice versa.¹²² The following study will show how mistaken that judgement was.

There are several reasons why this history has not been adequately addressed before. Empirically based scholarship on esoteric movements is still establishing itself

¹²⁰ 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).

¹²¹ Alfred Heidenreich, *Im Angesicht des Schicksals* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1928), 87. See also the chapter on “Steiners Okkultismus” in Eugene Levy, *Rudolf Steiners Weltanschauung und ihre Gegner* (Berlin: Verlag Siegfried Cronbach, 1925), 75-100. Non-anthroposophist sources offered similar appraisals; see the very sympathetic portrait of Steiner and anthroposophy as a German version of occultism in Mellinger, *Zeichen und Wunder*, 155-58.

¹²² Landau, *God is my Adventure*, 267. Marcum, “Rudolf Steiner: An Intellectual Biography,” 561 similarly claims that the Nazi era was merely “a period of persecution” for anthroposophists.

as an accepted academic enterprise, and considerable effort has understandably been directed toward retrieving the topic from its past dubious connotations by highlighting its familiar features and its reassuringly modern character. This otherwise commendable approach runs into significant difficulties when confronted with the parallel history of race thinking and of fascism, both of which are equally modern but a good deal less reassuring. The double-edged nature of modernity comes into sharper focus at the points where each of these three histories coincide, where occultism, racial thought and fascist politics cross paths. This poses a challenge for historians. It is tempting to see German occultism at last ‘escaping the shadow of Nazism.’¹²³ But the current state of research has barely begun to take the measure of that shadow, much less explore its depths, and the convoluted details of both Nazism and occultism display a wide variety of intermediate shades and hues.¹²⁴

Avoiding an oversimplified account of these varying shades and hues means taking seriously the ideological and practical affinities between occultism and fascism. These affinities were rarely straightforward; Nazism and Fascism had their own ideas about the spirit of the race and the soul of the nation. But they are an important part of what animated occultist responses to fascism and fascist responses to occultism, whether marked by approbation or opprobrium. The interface of spiritual ideals and secular realities, mediated by beliefs about nation and race, could have unanticipated

¹²³ See Heather Wolfram, “German Occultism Escapes the Shadow of Nazism” *Metascience* 14 (2005), 493-96, a very positive review of Treitel’s *A Science for the Soul*. In several ways, Treitel’s book itself encourages such readings. Her account is concerned to correct previous simplistic narratives of pervasive Nazi collusion with occult groups, and she rightly emphasizes the outright hostility that many Nazi officials displayed toward occultists. Yet in the process, her version of events tends at times to lose sight of the complexity inherent in these conflicts. Treitel portrays several leading German theosophists, for example, as alternatives to *völkisch* occultism or as simply victims of the Nazis, overlooking their own *völkisch* publications and pro-Nazi statements: see her portrait of Hermann Rudolph (*A Science for the Soul*, 102-03) and of Johannes Maria Verweyen (234-38, 288); I discuss both men in chapter 6. This neglects one crucial side of the dialectic of accommodation and persecution which characterized occultist interactions with Nazism.

¹²⁴ For a personal account written shortly after the war by a participant in the occult milieu see Gerda Walther, “Der Okkultismus im Dritten Reich” *Neue Wissenschaft: Zeitschrift für kritischen Okkultismus* November 1950, 34-41, December 1950, 15-19, January 1951, 29-34.

political ramifications, and uncovering them involves critical attention to both the proclaimed ideals and the practical realities. Studies of western esoteric tendencies have sometimes focused on what they taught, what they believed, what their internal practices were; my approach broadens this focus to include what their public activities were, how they put their ideas into action in concrete projects under the conditions prevailing at the time. Part of my task is to excavate the politics implicit in occult worldviews and organizations, against the grain of their own self-conception.¹²⁵ The point is not to show that certain figures took the political stances they did *because* they were anthroposophists; the point is to explore the range of political stances that anthroposophists adopted in the course of their efforts to forge a spiritual response to the ravages of materialism.

Anthroposophist perspectives on their movement's history during the Nazi era take a different tack. Steiner's followers believe that they were "immune to Hitler" and resisted the blandishments of Nazism's New Order all along, covertly or overtly.¹²⁶ These beliefs have been reiterated in many *ex post facto* anthroposophist accounts which portray Nazism as the tool of demonic forces or the working out of

¹²⁵ In a different context, Franz Boas offered this insight into the disparate nature of esoteric ideas: "Two characteristics of esoteric doctrines are quite striking. The first is that at the bottom of each doctrine there seems to be a certain pattern of thought which is applied to the whole domain of knowledge, and which gives the whole doctrine its essential character. [...] The second characteristic is that, notwithstanding this systematization of knowledge, there remain many ideas that are not coordinated with the general system, and that may be quite out of accord with it." Franz Boas, "The Ethnological Significance of Esoteric Doctrines" *Science* 16 (1902), 873.

¹²⁶ See the retrospective account by two pseudonymous anthroposophists: 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. The authors were 27 years old in 1933, working as teachers at the Berlin Waldorf school and living in an anthroposophical communal house. Among their claims: "Es gab unter all den Leuten, die wir kannten, so viele, die inneren Widerstand geleistet haben." (110) "Der Besitz von unseren [i.e. anthroposophist] Büchern war verboten, weil darin deutlich steht, was von Rassegedanken zu halten ist, und wie man sich zur Freiheit bekennen soll." (103) They also claim that concentration camps were never mentioned publicly and never reported in the press; in reality, the concentration camps were widely publicized in the German media and their existence was common knowledge. For context see Peter Longerich, "*Davon haben wir nichts gewusst!*" *Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung 1933-1945* (Munich: Siedler, 2006), and Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

karma.¹²⁷ That anthroposophists without exception utterly rejected Nazism in all its forms is simply self-evident in these accounts.¹²⁸ Claims such as these form the center of a mythology that is widespread within contemporary anthroposophical circles and has hindered the process of anthroposophists coming to terms with their past. The mythology is not made up out of thin air; there were indeed anthroposophists who opposed Nazism and were victims of its crimes.¹²⁹ What the mythology obscures, however, is the context within which these events took place, the circumstances surrounding concrete choices between collaboration and resistance, and the extent to which many other anthroposophists actively cooperated with the Nazi regime.

¹²⁷ For a variety of anthroposophist viewpoints see Ravenscroft, *Spear of Destiny*; Karl Heyer, *Wenn die Götter den Tempel verlassen: Wesen und Wollen des Nationalsozialismus und das Schicksal des deutschen Volkes* (Freiburg: Novalis, 1947); Folkert Wilken, *Geistesgeschichtliche Entwicklungslinien des deutschen Schicksals* (Stuttgart: Schmiedel, 1948); Gennadij Bondarew, *Anthroposophie auf der Kreuzung der okkult-politischen Bewegungen der Gegenwart* (Basel: Lochmann, 1996), 178-210; Bodo von Plato, "Der Nationalsozialismus und das Janushaupt der Neuzeit" *Die Drei* November 1997, 1026-37; Johannes Schneider, "Nationalsozialismus und europäische Kultur" *Die Drei* April 1998, 56-59; Thomas Göbel, "Von den Dimensionen des Bösen: Ein Versuch, das Phänomen 'Hitler' zu verstehen" *Das Goetheanum* November 7, 1999, 821-50; 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); Albert Hanel, *Rudolf Steiner – Adolf Hitler: Versuch einer Gegenüberstellung* (Frankfurt: R. G. Fischer, 2005); among the better treatments is Christoph Lindenberg, *Die Technik des Bösen: Zur Vorgeschichte und Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1985). Anthroposophist accounts of the history of Steiner's movement in the Nazi era include Arfst Wagner, "Anthroposophen und Nationalsozialismus: Probleme der Vergangenheit und der Gegenwart" *Flensburger Hefte* 32 (1991), 6-142; Wagner, "Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus" *Flensburger Hefte* Sonderheft 8 (1991), 50-94; 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; Uwe Werner, "Anthroposophen im Umgang mit Wirkungsweisen des NS-Regimes" *Die Drei* November 1997, 1059-70.

¹²⁸ "Es bedarf sicher nicht der Erwähnung, daß alle Persönlichkeiten, die auf der Grundlage der Anthroposophie standen, selbstverständlich auch das Regime des Dritten Reiches in all seinen Auswüchsen abgelehnt haben und dazu auch keinerlei Verbindungen suchten." Letter from Weleda AG to *Beiträge zur Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, May 30, 1983, quoted in *Flensburger Hefte* 32 (1991), 52.

¹²⁹ One of the better-known examples is the composer Viktor Ullmann, a member of the Anthroposophical Society from 1931 onward who incorporated anthroposophist motifs into his compositions. Ullmann, whose family was of Jewish origin, was killed at Auschwitz in October 1944.

From a historical perspective, this consistent tendentiousness in anthroposophist narratives constitutes a significant challenge, since little literature on the topic has been produced outside of the anthroposophical milieu. Even the best of the existing anthroposophist accounts are severely compromised by apologetic assumptions; their overall interpretative approach remains exculpatory rather than explanatory.¹³⁰ The most important of these texts is a thoroughly researched and highly detailed book on anthroposophy in the Nazi era by anthroposophist Uwe Werner, published in 1999.¹³¹ Werner's work draws on a very extensive base of archival sources and offers an impressive amount of invaluable information about Nazi responses to anthroposophist activities. On a wide range of issues, his account provides a more detailed reconstruction of events than mine does, and in a variety of cases his access to documents from anthroposophical archives yields a more thorough version of particular circumstances. Werner's depiction of the overall history of anthroposophy in the Nazi era, however, has several shortcomings. His focus on Nazi persecution of anthroposophists distorts the argument throughout the book and produces a reductively one-sided image of a multi-sided reality. He does not examine anthroposophical doctrines on race and ethnicity as a possible area of convergence

¹³⁰ Conversely, anthroposophist responses to critical scholarship often treat studies by historians and other external analysts as hostile attacks on the movement; this is particularly true of studies of anthroposophical race thinking. From a historical perspective, critical attention to anthroposophy's racial doctrines is not a reductive effort to discredit Steiner's work overall, but an effort to understand that work in its context. The same premise applies to scholarship on more aggressively racist ideologies; for example, Christian Geulen, *Wahlverwandte: Rassendiskurs und Nationalismus im späten 19. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2004) attempts to illuminate the underlying logic of seemingly irrational *völkisch* texts on race, noting that a historical approach "bedeutet, die Analyse 'rassistischer' Texte nicht auf eine Anklage zu reduzieren, sondern gerade das an ihnen herauszuarbeiten, was in ihrem Mystizismus einen nicht wegzuargumentierenden Teil moderner politischer Rationalität widerspiegelt." (37)

¹³¹ Uwe Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999). Werner is head archivist at the Goetheanum, the Anthroposophical Society's world headquarters in Dornach, Switzerland. An important collection of primary sources has also been published under anthroposophist auspices: Arfst Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung und Gesellschaft in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Rendsburg: Lohengrin-Verlag, 1992).

with National Socialist ideology. Above all, Werner repeatedly minimizes the degree of collusion between anthroposophist representatives and Nazi officials. He claims that “only a few” anthroposophists succumbed to the lures of Nazism and that “only a small group” tried to accommodate themselves to the regime.¹³² These claims are false, and they contribute to a flawed and partial representation of the historical evidence. This leaves much work to be done in achieving a fuller picture of the subject. In the words of a reviewer of Werner’s book: “Thus despite its extensive reappraisal of their history of persecution, the history of anthroposophists in the Nazi era remains to be written.”¹³³

Werner’s claims are not confined to the anthroposophical milieu. Similar views have been advanced, in more nuanced form, by non-anthroposophist historians. A representative example is a 2003 article by Michael Reißmann which investigates possible ideological connections among anthroposophy, *völkisch* thought, and National Socialism, finding only limited parallels, and argues that the historical links

¹³² Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 15, 97, 364. Critical reviews of Werner’s book by anthroposophists Michael Kalisch and Arfst Wagner can be found in *Beiträge zur Dreigliederung, Anthroposophie und Kunst* 48 (2000), 7-24.

¹³³ Rainer Hering, review of *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* in *German Studies Review* 23 (2000), 617-18. Hering’s is the only review I was able to locate in an academic journal. The concluding paragraph reads: “Wer aufgrund des Titels eine umfangreiche Untersuchung der Anthroposophen im “Dritten Reich” erwartet, wird enttäuscht, da die Darstellung Werners, wie er selbst in der Einleitung schreibt, lediglich “die Unterdrückung der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft, von anthroposophischen Einrichtungen und der Christengemeinschaft durch die nationalsozialistischen Machthaber untersucht” (S.1). Dies ist eine klare Verengung seiner Fragestellung auf die Verfolgungsgeschichte von Anthroposophen und ihren Organisationen. Wieweit es (aktive) Partizipation im “Dritten Reich” und Unterstützung des Nationalsozialismus von ihrer Seite aus gegeben hat, bleibt offen. Gab es in den Schriften Steiners Punkte, die eine – zumindest partielle – Übereinstimmung mit dem nationalsozialistischen Ideologiekonglomerat ermöglichten und so von Anthroposophen verstanden wurden? Wie äußerte er sich z.B. über Juden? Gab es rassistische Denkansätze? Werners knappe Bemerkungen dazu und zum Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges wirken eher apologetisch. Kritische Bemerkungen zum Verhalten an anthroposophischen Einrichtungen (insbesondere den Waldorfschulen) werden zwar kurz erwähnt, finden aber keinen Eingang in die Konzeption der Studie und werden nicht weiter ausgeführt. Unbefriedigend ist ein pauschaler Satz wie: “Da man insgesamt wußte, daß nur wenige Anthroposophen dem Nationalsozialismus verfallen waren, war die ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ kein Thema” (S. 364). Leider sind auch nicht alle Quellenangaben exakt. So steht trotz der umfangreichen Aufarbeitung ihrer Verfolgungsgeschichte die Geschichte der “Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus” noch aus.”

between anthroposophy and Nazism were, on balance, relatively insignificant.¹³⁴ The article provides a historically informed and careful analysis of the question and offers a number of important insights and judicious conclusions, but reveals several crucial limitations. Rißmann does not consistently recognize the apologetic nature of anthroposophical treatments, and at times relies credulously on published anthroposophist sources. The article underestimates the role of antisemitic motifs in anthroposophical doctrine, particularly in relation to Steiner's rejection of 'materialism,' neglects the Social Darwinist elements in Steiner's racial theory, overlooks the multiple interconnections between the anthroposophist movement and the *völkisch* milieu, and maintains that anthroposophy's race teachings were inessential to its overall worldview. Assessments like these, despite their other virtues, leave an unrepresentative and incomplete impression of the historical record.

The following analysis attempts to redress the imbalance in existing accounts of anthroposophy in Nazi Germany by examining the various facets of this complicated history in their changing constellations, and by restoring both the ideological contexts and the practical conditions that set the stage for this particularly fraught encounter between occultism and fascism. It is at bottom a study of the complex interactions between ideology and politics, between the rarified world of esoteric belief systems and the concrete political choices imposed on occult groups and individuals by the advent of fascism. The central concepts will be race and nation, both of them highly contested ideological constructs. My argument is that the very lability and elasticity of both of these ideological constructs, their fundamentally

¹³⁴ Michael Rißmann, "Nationalsozialismus, völkische Bewegung und Esoterik" *Zeitschrift für Genozidforschung* 4 (2003), 58-91. Rißmann's analysis is based on published texts, above all Steiner's works, not archival sources. He tends to portray the various instances of racist, nationalist, and antisemitic beliefs in Steiner's teachings as merely stereotypes typical of the era, rather than as distinctive components of Steiner's elaborate esoteric worldview.

protean nature, shaped both the convergence and the divergence between occultism and fascism.

In any historical account based on documents produced at the time, it can be difficult to determine whether particular statements were sincere or merely of a tactical nature, a problem that is heightened in the context of a repressive and intolerant regime. The aim in evaluating such sources is not to adopt the anthroposophists' perspective by taking their claims to Nazi officials at face value, or to adopt the Nazis' perspective by taking their assessments of anthroposophy at face value; the aim is instead to see what the documents reveal about the different ways that various anthroposophists and various Nazis viewed one another, and this includes attention to the rhetorical devices they employed, which may indicate widely varying degrees of sincerity. There is, however, a fairly striking consistency in anthroposophist statements across the time span examined here, both when circumstances seemed auspicious and when they looked grim, and even after the campaign against occultism in 1941. The content and style are often similar in all cases. This may suggest a relatively high degree of genuineness.¹³⁵

The chapters that follow will reveal, in some instances, a conspicuous level of both practical and ideological convergence between anthroposophists and National Socialists across a wide range of fields. This degree of confluence is all the more remarkable in light of the fact that anthroposophy was not among the more obviously right-wing strains within the German occult movement in the interwar period. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, many of Steiner's followers saw this turn of events as an opportunity to push forward the spiritual mission of Germany; the task of the

¹³⁵ Because my analysis is based primarily on documents available in public archives, which tend to over-represent government sources, there is a potential bias built into the evidence itself. I have tried to offset this factor by drawing extensively on anthroposophist periodicals, pamphlets, books, and intra-anthroposophical correspondence, when available. I also rely on post-war memoirs from anthroposophists and on anthroposophical publications from outside of Germany and Italy.

‘German essence,’ in anthroposophist eyes, was to heal the world. That these anthroposophists turned out to be mistaken seems obvious in retrospect, but it was not obvious to them at the time. The same is true for a variety of other non-anthroposophical occultists who initially took a favorable view of Nazism and its potential. From 1933 onward, an array of anthroposophists emphasized the commonalities between Steiner’s doctrines and Nazi ideals.

Anthroposophy was one of many small spiritual tendencies in Germany in the 1930s. These groups made difficult choices about how to respond to the new political order after 1933. The range of responses was enormous, from resolute resistance to complete capitulation, and in not a few cases enthusiastic participation in various Nazi endeavors. Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, steadfastly refused to cooperate with Nazism, and paid a high price for this choice. At the opposite end of the spectrum were several Germanic-neo-pagan groups that attempted to position themselves as the spiritual correlate to Nazism. Mainstream churches were divided over such matters, with ample instances of collaboration and notable resistance as well. Anthroposophists mostly fell into the middle of this continuum of responses. Many of them tried to ingratiate themselves with the Nazi authorities only to the extent necessary to be able to continue their own projects, such as Waldorf schools or biodynamic farms, while others embraced diverse aspects of Nazism more energetically.

In this respect, occult groups were not special. A number of the positions analyzed here extended across the spectrum of Weimar society, even well into Social Democratic circles in some cases. Once in power, Nazism was frequently successful at winning support from broad sectors of the German population. What this study of occultism points to is not that esoteric tendencies belong to another political or intellectual universe far from our own, but that many of the ideas traditionally associated with the right-wing margins of interwar German culture were actually

widely spread throughout Germany and other parts of Europe, and in many instances were tied to aspirations for new, humane, progressive forms of life and thought. Occult beliefs were often much closer to liberal and enlightened beliefs than is commonly acknowledged, in ways that are both familiar and unsettling; a further illustration of the entwinement of myth and enlightenment. The received notion that the shrouded topography lying between occultism and fascism is profoundly remote and essentially estranged from our world today may be little more than a convenient way of pretending that all of the historical skeletons are safely hidden away in somebody else's closet. As eccentric as they are, and as arcane as they may seem, the details of esotericism's past 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.

Chapter 1

Germany's Savior: Rudolf Steiner and the Esoteric Meaning of Nation and Race

In the early 1920s, at the height of Rudolf Steiner's public renown, his followers reportedly used the phrase "Germany's savior" to describe how future generations would one day view the founder of anthroposophy.¹ The intense hopes and expectations that anthroposophists invested in Steiner revolved around a vision of spiritual renewal that would redeem Germany and, eventually, the world. The particulars of this redemptive vision were spelled out in Steiner's own numerous works, and elaborated upon in the works of his followers. Grounded in anthroposophy's distinctive form of esoteric spirituality, a significant component in this narrative of redemption was conceived in explicitly racial and ethnic terms. This opening chapter will examine these aspects of Steiner's teachings by pursuing the related questions: What was the Germany that Steiner and his followers hoped to save, and what would its salvation entail? Why did race and nation matter to Steiner's esoteric worldview?

Messianic hopes for spiritual, political, and national redemption in early twentieth century Germany were by no means the preserve of occult movements. They

¹ See Siegfried Kracauer, "Anthroposophie und Wissenschaft" in Kracauer, *Aufsätze 1915-1926* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990), 110-16; originally published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1921. Citing Albert Steffen, who succeeded Steiner as President of the Anthroposophical Society after Steiner's death in 1925, Kracauer writes: "Nichts kennzeichnet vielleicht besser die Erwartungen, die man in anthroposophischen Kreisen selber an einen Sieg der Anschauungen Dr. Steiners knüpft, als der Ausspruch des Schweizer Dichters Albert Steffen, daß spätere Zeiten dereinst Steiner als den Retter Deutschlands preisen werden. Die Berechtigung dieser Überzeugung ernsthaft zu prüfen, ist umso notwendiger, als die Anhänger Steiners nicht müde werden, sie mit allen Mitteln der Überredung in die Herzen empfänglicher Jugend einzuhämmern, die nach einem ihr Leben erhöhenden Glauben dürstet." (110) Kracauer's article is a report on the "Anthroposophische Hochschultagung" in Darmstadt in July 1921. The same collection of essays, volume 5 in Kracauer's *Schriften*, contains three other critical appraisals of Steiner and anthroposophy written for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1921 as well as an obituary of Steiner from 1925. For a further analysis and critique of anthroposophy from 1922 see Kracauer's essay "Die Wartenden" in Kracauer, *Das Ornament der Masse* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963), especially 109-13.

were widespread within Wilhelmine and Weimar culture and cut across political and confessional lines.² Steiner was one of many who “sought to become prophets who would point the way to a national rebirth.”³ The specifically anthroposophical vision of saving Germany was indebted to many of the idiosyncratic theosophical theories outlined in the Introduction. Anthroposophist appropriation and re-formulation of these theories was in turn powerfully inflected by Steiner’s own Austrian and German intellectual background. In order to present these ideas in their historical context, a brief overview of Steiner’s development and of the emergence of the anthroposophical movement is in order.

Steiner was born in 1861 in a town on the periphery of the Austro-Hungarian empire.⁴ He spent his student years in Vienna, where he concentrated on natural

² There is an extensive literature on this cultural context; for particularly perceptive studies 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; Hermand, *Der alte Traum vom neuen Reich*, 117-30; Martin Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt: Revolution, Inflation und Moderne* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 309-15; David Redles, “A World Turned Upside Down: Weimar Chaos and the Culture of Apocalypse” in Redles, *Hitler’s Millennial Reich: Apocalyptic Belief and the Search for Salvation* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 14-45; for broader context see the recent study by Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik: Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen in Deutschland 1918-1933* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008).

³ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), xi. Although Steiner is not one of the figures examined in detail in the book, many of Stern’s descriptions of this general cultural condition could be applied to the early anthroposophical movement as well: opposed to “the growing power of liberalism and secularism” (xi), “denigrating reason and elevating feeling” (ix), nurturing a form of “mystical nationalism” centered on “a new German destiny” (xiii), a movement that “depreciated reason and exalted intuition” (xiv) and propagated “a conspiratorial view of history and society” (xix), all built around a narrative of “national redemption” (xx).

⁴ There is no scholarly biography of Steiner. Anthroposophist biographies are invariably hagiographic, albeit to different degrees; the best of them is Christoph Lindenberg’s two-volume work *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Biographie* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1997). Lindenberg’s earlier compilation *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Chronik* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1988) is also very useful for basic data on Steiner’s life. Of the shorter biographies the most generally reliable is Gerhard Wehr, *Rudolf Steiner: Leben – Erkenntnis – Kulturimpuls* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1993). Wehr is not an anthroposophist, but his highly sympathetic account follows standard anthroposophist interpretations and uncritically accepts anthroposophical claims regarding Steiner’s stance during the First World War, the circumstances of his death, and other matters. Popular biographies have also been written by non-anthroposophist aficionados of the occult; see Colin Wilson, *Rudolf Steiner: The Man and His Vision* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1985), and Gary Lachman, *Rudolf Steiner: An Introduction to his Life and Work* (New York: Tarcher, 2007). Both are at times overly credulous toward anthroposophical sources. For helpful

sciences and became involved in German nationalist student organizations.⁵ After editing several volumes of Goethe's scientific writings, Steiner moved to Weimar in 1890 to work at the Goethe and Schiller archive, eventually assisting at the Nietzsche archive as well.⁶ He received a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Rostock

overviews see James Webb, "Rudolf Steiner" in Richard Cavendish, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Unexplained, Magic, Occultism and Parapsychology* (London: Routledge, 1974), 235-40, and Ullrich, *Rudolf Steiner*, 1-37. Steiner began writing an autobiography near the end of his life; it remained unfinished and includes only cursory attention to his theosophical and anthroposophical career after 1900, while the earlier years are systematically re-interpreted through the lens of Steiner's mature anthroposophical perspective. The autobiography nonetheless remains a crucial document of the late Steiner's self-perception and self-presentation; see Rudolf Steiner, *Mein Lebensgang* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1925); authorized English translation: Steiner, *The Course of my Life* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1951). The most comprehensive account of Steiner's intellectual development is available in Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 435-957.

⁵ In the early 1880s Steiner served as treasurer, librarian, and for half a year as chairman of a German nationalist student association, the *Deutsche Lesehalle* at the Technical College in Vienna; cf. Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Biographie*, 62, and Steiner, *Mein Lebensgang*, 86-87. For background on the *Deutsche Lesehalle* see William McGrath, "Student Radicalism in Vienna" *Journal of Contemporary History* 2 (1967), 183-201. Two of Steiner's influential early teachers, Karl Julius Schröer and Robert Zimmermann, may have facilitated his entry into German nationalist cultural circles in Austria. On Zimmermann's involvement in German nationalism see William Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 287-89; for Schröer's views see Karl Julius Schröer, *Die Deutschen in Österreich-Ungarn und ihre Bedeutung für die Monarchie* (Vienna: Deutscher Verein, 1879). On Steiner's relationship to Schröer see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 441-48. Schröer introduced Steiner to Goethe scholarship, while Steiner later borrowed the term "anthroposophy" from Zimmermann.

⁶ On Steiner as a crucial figure in initiating the iconic status of Goethe as a paragon of conservative *Kulturkritik*, along with Julius Langbehn, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and the circles of the Conservative Revolution, see Karl Robert Mandelkow, *Goethe in Deutschland: Rezeptionsgeschichte eines Klassikers* vol. I (Munich: Beck, 1980), 193-199. See also Mandelkow, "Goethes Naturauffassung im Urteil der Rezeptionsgeschichte" in Mandelkow, *Gesammelte Aufsätze und Vorträge zur Klassik- und Romantikrezeption in Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2001), 77-86, particularly 81. Chamberlain praised Steiner's works on Goethe; see Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Immanuel Kant: Die Persönlichkeit als Einführung in das Werk* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1905), 120-21. These factors are especially noteworthy in light of anthroposophist attempts to enlist Goethe as an intellectual predecessor to Steiner, whose early works impute to Goethe an epistemological stance similar to Steiner's own. Scholars have expressed skepticism toward such claims, noting that Steiner's perspective has more in common with the nature philosophy of late German Romanticism than with Goethe's scientific endeavors. R.H. Stephenson, *Goethe's Conception of Knowledge and Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 30, argues that Steiner's epistemology was "much closer to Schelling than to Goethe." Werner Weiland, "Goetheanism und Anthroposophie" *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 109 (1992), 207-18, emphasizes the differences between Steiner's epistemology and Goethe's. Cf. also Alfred Schmidt, *Goethes herrlich leuchtende Natur: Eine philosophische Studie zur deutschen Spätaufklärung* (Munich: Hanser, 1984), and Margrit Wyder, *Goethes Naturmodell: Die Scala naturae und ihre Transformationen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1998). For an anthroposophical view see Peter Heusser, "Goethe und Rudolf Steiner, Naturwissenschaft und Geisteswissenschaft" in Heusser, ed., *Goethes Beitrag zur Erneuerung der Naturwissenschaften* (Bern: Haupt, 2000), 487-517. In his introductions to Goethe's works, Steiner forcefully criticized positions that later became central to his mature esoteric worldview. Steiner rejected, for example, the notion of an "außerweltlichen Lenkers der

in 1891 with a thesis on epistemology in Kant and Fichte, and in 1893 published what he considered his philosophical magnum opus, *The Philosophy of Freedom*.⁷

Preaching an individualist message, this book generally discounted the significance of racial and ethnic categories, but also contained passages characterizing “race, people, nation” as a “naturally given totality” and emphasizing the importance of such putatively natural traits.⁸ In 1894 Steiner first met Ernst Haeckel 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 era.⁹ By the time he moved to Berlin in 1897, Steiner’s outlook combined elements of German

Menschengeschichte” and “einen Weltenlenker, der außerhalb unserer selbst unsern Handlungen Ziel und Richtung setzte” (Rudolf Steiner, “Einleitung” to Steiner, ed., *Goethes Werke: Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, vol. II, Berlin: Spemann, 1889, xlvi).

⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *Philosophie der Freiheit* (Berlin: Emil Felber, 1894; the publication actually appeared in November 1893). The book did not find a substantial philosophical echo but received some attention in the broader press. The reception in Germany was mixed; the review in the *Philosophisches Jahrbuch 1895* was largely critical, while the anonymous reviewer for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* was generally positive. The texts of these and other contemporary reviews are available in David Marc Hoffmann and Walter Kugler, eds., *Dokumente zur “Philosophie der Freiheit”* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1994), 423-500. For reactions outside of Germanophone Europe see e.g. the largely negative review in *The Philosophical Review* 4 (1895), 573-74, or the similarly critical review by Giovanni Gentile of the revised 1918 edition of the book in *La Critica* 18 (1919), 369-72.

⁸ Rudolf Steiner, *The Philosophy of Freedom* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1964), 203: “Each member of a totality is determined, as regards its characteristics and functions, by the whole totality. A racial group is a totality and all the people belonging to it bear the characteristic features that are inherent in the nature of the group. How the single member is constituted, and how he will behave, are determined by the character of the racial group.” Steiner goes on to say that free individuals strive to overcome these generic qualities, a trope which later took on crucial significance in his mature anthroposophical teachings about race and ethnicity.

⁹ See Ernst Haeckel, *Der Monismus als Band zwischen Religion und Wissenschaft. Glaubensbekenntnis eines Naturforschers* (Bonn: Strauss, 1893). For context see Niles Holt, “Ernst Haeckel’s Monistic Religion” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32 (1971), 265-80; Bernhard Kleeberg, *Theophysis: Ernst Haeckels Philosophie des Naturganzen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2005); Mario Di Gregorio, *From Here to Eternity: Ernst Haeckel and Scientific Faith* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 188-261 and 487-98. 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). On Steiner’s correspondence with Haeckel and his intense commitment to Monism around the turn of the century see also *Anthroposophie* January 1934, 137-48. For anthroposophical perspectives see Johannes Hemleben, *Rudolf Steiner und Ernst Haeckel* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1965), and Karl Ballmer and Hans Gessner, *Ernst Haeckel und Rudolf Steiner* (Besazio: Fornasella, 2003).

Idealism, Romanticism, Nietzschean bohemianism and a radical individualism heavily indebted to Max Stirner.¹⁰

Steiner spent years unsuccessfully seeking a university 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 Workers' Educational School, founded by the Social Democrats, from 1899 to 1904.¹¹ Steiner also participated in the literary circle known as "Die Kommenden."¹² Many of his views on religion in the 1890s displayed a basically atheist cast of mind, and Steiner at this time was harshly critical of the established Christian churches as well as of esoteric spiritual alternatives. His involvement in Monist circles was particularly intensive around the turn of the century, above all within the Giordano Bruno League, although it is difficult to assess the impact of this phase on Steiner's later intellectual development, not least because of the remarkably ambivalent ideological and political character of the Monist movement overall.¹³

¹⁰ 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).

¹¹ On Steiner's teaching at the workers' school in Berlin see Vernon Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 163-64. Steiner's lectures at the school are collected in Rudolf Steiner, *Über Philosophie, Geschichte und Literatur* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1983).

¹² In addition to Jewish authors such as Ludwig Jacobowski and Stefan Zweig, the later Nazi theorist Dietrich Eckart also belonged to the circle *Die Kommenden* around 1900 and came into contact with Steiner there; cf. Helms, *Ideologie der anonymen Gesellschaft*, 483. For Zweig's reminiscence of Steiner see Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1962), 112-13; for a critical recollection of Steiner's role in *Die Kommenden* see Erich Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1961), 68-74, and Erich Mühsam, *Tagebücher 1910-1924* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 23.

¹³ For an incisive analysis of "the politically highly ambivalent Monist movement" see Gangolf Hübinger, "Die monistische Bewegung" in Hübinger, *Kultur und Kulturwissenschaften um 1900* vol. II (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997), 246-59 (quote at 247). Hübinger concludes that "Monism,

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 without exception scathingly critical.¹⁴ The epistemological position outlined in his

oscillating between middle-class left social reform and *völkisch* ideals of the New Right,” never achieved a clear or coherent political profile (258). Cf. Frank Simon-Ritz, “Die freigeistige Bewegung im Kaiserreich” in Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, eds., *Handbuch zur ‘Völkischen Bewegung’*, 208-23, and 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. On the confluence of scientific and religious themes within Monism see 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. On the relations between Monism and occultism see Monika Fick, *Sinnenwelt und Weltseele* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), and Rita Panesar, *Medien religiöser Sinnstiftung: Der ‘Volkserzieher’, die Zeitschriften des ‘Deutschen Monistenbundes’ und die ‘Neue Metaphysische Rundschau’, 1897 – 1936* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006). On the *Giordano-Bruno-Bund* in the context of fin-de-siècle Monism see Andreas Daum, *Wissenschaftspopularisierung im 19. Jahrhundert: bürgerliche Kultur, naturwissenschaftliche Bildung und die deutsche Öffentlichkeit, 1848-1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998), 214-16. For general background see Paul Ziche, ed., *Monismus um 1900: Wissenschaftskultur und Weltanschauung* (Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 2000); Frank Simon-Ritz, *Die Organisation einer Weltanschauung: Die freigeistige Bewegung im Wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1997); 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; 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. The affinities between Monism and theosophy have also been the subject of recent scholarly attention, with two relevant presentations at the October 2009 conference in Belfast on “The Monist Century 1845-1945”: Mark Bevir, “Socialism and theosophy as examples of evolutionary monistic theorizing” and Gauri Viswanathan, “Monism and suffering: Theosophy’s mediation of secularism and religion.”

¹⁴ 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 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 Litteratur*, 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

philosophical works from that decade, moreover, is decidedly this-worldly and makes no reference, even obliquely, to the “higher worlds” that stand at the center of theosophical and anthroposophical thought.¹⁵ Within the space of two years, however, Steiner was a convinced theosophist. Without minimizing the anomalies involved in Steiner’s conversion to an occult worldview, it is worth emphasizing that fin-de-siècle theosophy was a notably labile construct that attracted many people seeking a “synthesis of science, religion, and philosophy.”¹⁶ A number of personal and circumstantial factors appear to have played a role in Steiner’s theosophical turn, but there was an unmistakable element of genuine conviction as well. He was originally invited to speak to a theosophical gathering in Berlin in 1900, and in the course of 1900-02 he applied unsuccessfully for several other jobs, including university lecturer and newspaper editor. Steiner’s choice of a theosophical career, after some hesitation,

spiritism and related phenomena, in which he roundly rejected supernatural explanations and the notion of “otherworldly beings” (“jenseitige Wesen”) and endorsed Haeckel’s Monism: “Hypnotismus mit Berücksichtigung des Spiritismus,” unsigned report originally published in the newspaper *Deutschland*, March 26, 1893; 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” (“übernatürliche Weltordnung”): Steiner, *Haeckel und seine Gegner*, 30.

¹⁵ The profound differences between Steiner’s pre-1900 publications and his post-1900 esoteric teachings are often obscured or denied by his followers and have not always been adequately acknowledged by scholars. Perry Myers, for example, claims that “there is little transformation in the substance of Steiner’s thought through time” (Myers, *The Double-Edged Sword*, 75). For massive evidence to the contrary see the first volume of Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*. Anthroposophists generally consider Steiner’s early work fully consistent with his mature views, a claim which Steiner himself often reiterated after 1901. The 1918 second edition of Steiner’s *Philosophy of Freedom*, for example, contains numerous passages that have been fundamentally altered from the original edition, while Steiner’s foreword to the second edition nonetheless insists that no substantive changes were made.

¹⁶ The quoted phrase is the subtitle of the central theosophical text, Helena Blavatsky’s 1888 work *The Secret Doctrine*. Other prominent converts to theosophy sometimes displayed a similar background and trajectory; Annie Besant, for example, Blavatsky’s eventual successor as head of the international Theosophical Society, had been an avowed atheist and actively involved in social reform efforts before turning to esoteric endeavors. For perceptive studies of this process see Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, and Wessinger, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism*; for an alternative account of Besant’s turn to theosophy, emphasizing the role of evolutionary thought, see Mark Bevir, “Annie Besant’s Quest for Truth: Christianity, Secularism, and New Age Thought” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 50 (1999), 62-93. On the specifically German context around 1900 see Linse, “‘Säkularisierung’ oder ‘Neue Religiosität’?”

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 at least the theosophists appreciated his abilities and wanted his leadership. Steiner's increasingly close personal involvement with active theosophist Marie von Sivers, whom he met in 1900 and eventually married, also played an important role.

Soon after joining the Theosophical Society, Steiner became General Secretary of its German section, a position he held until 1912, when he 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, Steiner continued to develop anthroposophy as a worldview and as a movement, overseeing a steady rise in membership and in public profile in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria in particular.¹⁷

Steiner's transition to a messianic figure in the eyes of his followers and his apotheosis as "Germany's savior" 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

¹⁷ 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 long-time anthroposophist reminisced: "Die Menschen zeigten sich nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg hungrig nach geistiger Nahrung. Weder das Geistesleben noch das politische und Wirtschaftsleben konnte ihren Hunger stillen. Sie suchten sich zu betäuben mit Alkohol, Nikotin, Tanz usw. Diejenigen, welche tiefere und kräftigere Erkenntnisbedürfnisse hatten, suchten Anschluß an unsere Bewegung zu bekommen. Unser Zweig in Breslau stieg von ein Paar Dutzend auf Hunderte von Mitgliedern." Moritz Bartsch, "Ein Schlesier berichtet" in Erika Beltle and Kurt Vierl, eds., *Erinnerungen an Rudolf Steiner* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1979), 476.

seemed to offer a way out of the crisis.¹⁸ In the view of some prominent anthroposophists, Steiner had indeed been “sent by God.”¹⁹ And the Germany that 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.²⁰ 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, in turn, a central element within anthroposophy’s elaborate occult cosmology, and thus imparted special esoteric significance to questions of nation and race. Although these themes

¹⁸ A sense of the general mood among Steiner’s followers at the time can be gained 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; cf. 119. Another contemporary anthroposophist pamphlet depicted Steiner as a figure of world-historical proportions, ending with this encomium: “Rudolf Steiner ist ein Mensch von welthistorischer Größe; wenn einer unserer Zeitgenossen, verdient er das Wort: *er ist groß!*” Walter Kühne, *Rudolf Steiners Lebenswerk* (Breslau: Bund für Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus, 1921), 18. Steiner’s wife Marie portrayed him posthumously as an ‘Initiate’ leading his followers in changing the course of evolution: “In this world of encompassing darkness, there shines a source of light. It has been revealed to us by a man who towered immeasurably above his time. [...] 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*, 10.

¹⁹ Friedrich Rittelmeyer quoted in Maria Josepha Krück von Poturzyn, ed., *Wir erlebten Rudolf Steiner: Erinnerungen seiner Schüler* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1957), 35. Cf. Jan Badewien, *Anthroposophie: Eine kritische Darstellung* (Konstanz: Friedrich Bahn Verlag, 1990), 178-90 for many similar examples. On nineteenth-century precursors to such expectations see Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany*.

²⁰ For a revealing point of comparison see the discussion of similar themes in Robert Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and his Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

were presented in forthrightly esoteric terms within the full-fledged anthroposophical spiritual program during Steiner's mature career as an occult spokesperson, a more complete comprehension of their origins and ramifications requires an examination of Steiner's early German nationalist thought before his turn to esotericism.

Steiner's involvement in the German nationalist movement in Austria in the 1880s revealed a number of themes that re-appeared in 'spiritualized' form after 1900 and powerfully shaped his later teachings. Foremost among these themes was an abiding commitment to the notion of a German *Kulturmission*, a cultural and civilizational mission. To appreciate the full extent of this fundamental conviction, it is necessary to review its 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 threatening multinational environment of the Habsburg empire in his youth.²¹ This retrospective self-assessment is consistent with Steiner's activities during his Vienna period. Throughout the 1880s, Steiner participated actively in the somewhat nebulously defined *deutschnational* movement in Austria, a tendency that is usually rendered in English as 'pan-German.'²²

²¹ Steiner, *From Symptom to Reality in Modern History*, 162-63. Steiner continues: "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.

²² Although the term "pan-German" does not entirely overlap with the range of meanings covered by "deutschnational," it has been the standard English translation of the latter word for decades. I will use "pan-German" here, with the caveat that in the Austrian context of the 1880s it is not necessarily synonymous with "alldeutsch" or "großdeutsch" or other labels commonly rendered as "pan-German." Particularly in its early stages, the Austrian pan-German current did not uniformly demand unification with Germany. The 1882 Linz Program, for example, the founding manifesto of Austrian pan-Germanism, did not call for unification of Germany and Austria but for closer economic and political ties, including a customs union and a strengthened military alliance. For brief overviews in English see Arthur May, *The Hapsburg Monarchy 1867-1914* (New York: Norton, 1968), 210-12; Robert Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1526-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 432-35; Robert Kann, *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy 1848-1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 98-101; and Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna* (New York: Vintage, 1981), 120-33. For more detailed historical context see the chapter on

These youthful pan-German sympathies are attested in Steiner's early correspondence as well as in his student activities, and are recalled in his autobiography.²³ Above all, however, they are on conspicuous display in the dozens of articles that he wrote for the pan-German press in Austria between 1882 and 1891.²⁴ While these writings are forthrightly German nationalist, they do not espouse a state-

"Deutschnationalismus" in Albert Fuchs, *Geistige Strömungen in Österreich 1867-1918* (Vienna: Globus, 1949); Donald Daviau, "Hermann Bahr and the Radical Politics of Austria in the 1880s" *German Studies Review* 5 (1982), 163-85; Günter Schödl, "Alldeutsch-deutschnationale Politik in der Habsburgermonarchie und im Deutschen Reich" in Schödl, *Formen und Grenzen des Nationalen* (Erlangen: IGW, 1990), 49-89; Andrew Whiteside, *The Socialism of Fools: Georg von Schönerer and Austrian Pan-Germanism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Lothar Höbelt, *Kornblume und Kaiseradler: Die deutschfreiheitlichen Parteien Altösterreichs 1882-1918* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1993); and Michael Wladika, *Hitlers Vätergeneration: Die Ursprünge des Nationalsozialismus in der k.u.k. Monarchie* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005). It is worth noting that this variant of nationalist thought had its roots at least as much on the political left as on the right.

²³ Steiner refers laconically to his pan-German period several times in his autobiography, writing for example: "I took an interested part in the struggle which the Germans in Austria were then carrying on in behalf of their national existence." (Steiner, *Course of my Life*, 142). Lindenberg's biography notes that already in the early 1880s Steiner considered himself a member of the pan-German movement and that his involvement in pan-German organizations went well beyond the usual level of commitment typical for Austro-German university students at the time: Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Biographie*, 61-62. Looking back on his pan-German engagement in a 1900 article, Steiner identified himself with "the idealistic pan-German tendency" in contrast to the racial antisemitism of Georg von Schönerer's faction, while conceding that Schönerer's rise to leadership did not induce Steiner and his companions to break with the pan-German movement: Rudolf Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte 1887-1901* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1966), 362.

²⁴ Steiner's pan-German 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 Presse* was the organ of the "Deutscher Verein" in Troppau, a city 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), which was the major unifying factor of the group. The *Deutsche Zeitung*, finally, 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 until the rise of Schönerer and Lueger in the 1890s. For background on the *Deutsche Zeitung* see Pieter Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire 1848-1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 169, and Hildegard Kernmayer, *Judentum im Wiener Feuilleton 1848-1903* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), 284-86. Extensive information on each of these papers, and on others to which Steiner contributed, is also available in Höbelt, *Kornblume und Kaiseradler*.

centered power politics or call for authoritarian solutions to the interethnic conflicts of the Habsburg realm; instead they preach a kind of cultural supremacy in which non-German communities are urged to embrace purportedly German standards of civilization.²⁵ The culmination of Steiner's pan-German journalism came in 1888, when he took over editorship of the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* for six months.²⁶ This weekly paper, which carried the subtitle "organ for the national interests of the German people," was a major mouthpiece of radical German nationalism.²⁷ 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 Pan-German cause in Austria."²⁸ The specific variant of nationalist discourse that Steiner articulated in these articles was probably most closely aligned with the views of the so-called Pernerstorfer circle, a group of German nationalist intellectuals and activists associated with Austrian politician Engelbert Pernerstorfer.²⁹

²⁵ The fragmentary remnants of Steiner's 1882-85 correspondence with his friend Emil Schönaich, editor of the *Freie Schlesische Presse*, indicate that the young Steiner was a supporter of Otto Steinwender, leader of the mainstream faction within the *deutschnational* current and for a time rival to the radically antisemitic wing headed by Schönerer, though Steinwender himself occasionally evinced a more 'moderate' form of tactical antisemitism. See the letters from Schönaich to Steiner in *Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe* 52 (1975). In an 1891 letter to a Jewish friend, however, Steiner claimed that he had always been critical of Steinwender; see Steiner, *Briefe* vol. I, 174. For background on Steinwender see Jörg Kirchhoff, *Die Deutschen in der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie* (Berlin: Logos, 2001), 72-74; and Höbelt, *Kornblume und Kaiseradler*, 30-75.

²⁶ Steiner, *Mein Lebensgang*, 146-47; Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Biographie*, 152-60; Wehr, *Rudolf Steiner*, 68, 82. Anthroposophists nonetheless insist that Steiner rejected all forms of nationalism throughout his life; for anthroposophists, Steiner's approach is instead simply a form of cosmopolitanism.

²⁷ On the central role of the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* in promoting the "sharper-key politics" of radicalized German nationalism in Austria see McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, 201-06. For further background on the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* see also Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1242-45. Other scholars have emphasized "den deutschnationalen Radikalismus des Blattes" as well; see Jacob Toury, "Josef Samuel Bloch und die jüdische Identität im Österreichischen Kaiserreich" in Walter Grab, ed., *Jüdische Integration und Identität in Deutschland und Österreich 1848-1918* (Tel Aviv: Institute of German History, 1984), 41-63, quote at 55. Steiner first wrote for the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* in 1885.

²⁸ 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.

²⁹ Alongside Schönerer, Pernerstorfer (1850-1918) was one of the co-founders of the early pan-German movement in Austria, and an ally of Steinwender in the mid-1880s; he later migrated leftward

Steiner's 1888 articles for the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* portray the Germans in Austria as threatened by an "onslaught from all sides," referring in particular to "Czech agitators" and "the evil Russian influence" along with Poles, Magyars, and other non-German ethnic groups, while at the same time celebrating "the cultural mission that is the duty of the German people in Austria."³⁰ According to Steiner, "modern culture" has been "chiefly produced by the Germans." He thus condemns not only any accommodation to non-German ethnic groups but indeed any cooperation with ethnically German parties that are insufficiently nationalist, calling these parties "un-German."³¹ In the young Steiner's view, "the Slavic enemy" both within and

politically and eventually joined the Social Democrats in 1896. For a detailed and perceptive study of the Pernerstorfer circle see McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*. McGrath emphasizes the group's "commitment to radical German nationalism" and its "deep faith in the mission of German culture" based on an idealized vision of "the heroic community of the German nation." (72) For additional background on Pernerstorfer and Steinwender see Höbelt, *Kornblume und Kaiseradler*, 39-47; Wladika, *Hitlers Vätergeneration*, 98-100, 148-52, 163-67, 176-78, 197-200, 283-86, 546-52; and Robert Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews: The Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary* (London: Associated University Presses, 1982), 192-95, 232-42, 264-85, 343-48. Pernerstorfer published in the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* during Steiner's tenure as editor in 1888, and Steiner published in Pernerstorfer's paper *Deutsche Worte* between 1889 and 1891. In 1916 Steiner referred to Pernerstorfer as "my old friend": Rudolf Steiner, *Gegenwärtiges und Vergangenes im Menschengeste* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1962), 288. See also the reference to Pernerstorfer in Steiner, *Mein Lebensgang*, 148. In 1888 Steiner declared that even Pernerstorfer, whose "manly manner" he greatly admired, had not grasped "the highest national interests of the Germans" (Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 114). This claim is consistent with Steiner's emphatic message that not only the non-German parties and not only the supposedly irresolute German Liberals but even the hard-line German nationalist parties had failed to promote the German national cause adequately; the same 1888 essay ends with this sentence: "The duty of the Germans is to work on their national organization, refuse the advances of false friends, and protest against rotten compromises put forth within their own party." (ibid., 120)

³⁰ Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 112, 85, 69. Steiner occasionally refers to the non-German peoples of Austria as "the enemy" (e.g. 115). His remarks consistently emphasize German cultural superiority: "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).

³¹ Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 119. Steiner blames the Austro-German Liberals in particular for failing to insist strongly enough that the Slavs must subordinate their own cultures to German culture; this failure "forced the German people to form a party in which the national idea is paramount" (113), namely the German nationalist party. But even the forthrightly nationalist party, in Steiner's eyes, did not do enough "for the national cause" (114). Contrary to Steiner's implication, Austro-German liberalism itself had become thoroughly nationalist by the late 1880s; his polemics against it indicate an especially zealous stance on his part at this time. Indeed Steiner's harsh denunciations of the German Liberals for betraying their people reveal a firmly ethnocentric

outside of Austria-Hungary is marked by an “empty national ego” and “spiritual barrenness,” which is why the Slavs “would like nothing more than to annihilate the achievements of our European culture.”³² Depicting Czech demands for political participation as a direct threat to German cultural superiority, Steiner’s pan-German essays exclaim:

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 [i.e. the Germans] from whom one receives the spiritual light, a light without which European culture and education must remain a closed book.³³

In contrast, Steiner exalts “what the German is capable of, when he depends completely on his Germanness, and solely on his Germanness.”³⁴ Finally, Steiner’s 1888 articles demand that the Habsburg empire’s political agenda be set by “the exclusively national elements of the German people in Austria,” namely “the pan-

intransigence: “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) Steiner similarly rejected liberalism as un-German in an 1891 article in Pernerstorfer’s *Deutsche Worte*; see Steiner, *Methodische Grundlagen der Anthroposophie*, 298. For further context 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.

³² Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 117. Steiner also fulminates against “the culture-hating Russian colossus” and condemns the abuse of the Austrian state “for un-German purposes” (140). Comparable passages are to be found in Steiner’s later works as well; see e.g. his 1920 remarks on how the “German character” of Vienna was ruined by an unfortunate influx of Slavs (“das eindringende Slawentum”), which regrettably turned Vienna into an “international” and “cosmopolitan” city: Rudolf Steiner, *Soziale Ideen - Soziale Wirklichkeit - Soziale Praxis* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1999), 240-41.

³³ Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 141-42. Steiner demanded, in other words, that the non-German communities adopt a German cultural framework in order to achieve ‘civilization’ and ‘freedom.’ The concrete institutional form that such concepts were to take, however, remained unclear. For background on similar considerations in nineteenth-century German contexts see Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), and for critical studies of German rhetorics of freedom and community see Klaus von See, *Freiheit und Gemeinschaft: Völkisch-nationales Denken in Deutschland zwischen Französischer Revolution und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2001), and Jost Hermand and Michael Niedermeier, *Revolutio germanica: Die Sehnsucht nach der “alten Freiheit” der Germanen* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2002).

³⁴ Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 113.

Germans.”³⁵ These arguments did not cease with the end of Steiner’s Vienna period, however. 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.”³⁶ 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.”³⁷ Similarly, Steiner’s 1898 essay “On Pan-German Poets of Struggle in Austria” describes for his Berlin-based readership “the essence of the German national soul from the viewpoint of the German nationalist-minded Austrian.”³⁸

Steiner’s early German nationalist essays do not merely celebrate the wonders of the German national soul; they develop a specific theory of the relationship between

³⁵ Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 143. In the same essay, titled “Die Deutschen in Österreich und ihre nächsten Aufgaben,” Steiner wrote: “Wenn die Deutschen aufhören sollen, diesem Staate, den sie gegründet, dem sie seine Lebensaufgaben gegeben haben, das Gepräge zu geben, dann hört auch dieser Staat auf, diejenige Rolle zu spielen, die ihm von der geschichtlichen Entwicklung im westeuropäischen Kulturleben zugeordnet ist.” (ibid. 140)

³⁶ Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 214.

³⁷ Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 215-16. This supposed loss of power, Steiner explains, is due to a lack of suitably compelling cultural and spiritual goals as the crux of German politics and of the German mission in Austria. On occasion, Steiner clothed his nationalist arguments in philosophical terminology; for a typical example of Steiner’s celebration of German philosophy as the great achievement of the German *Volk* see Rudolf Steiner, “Das Ansehen der deutschen Philosophie einst und jetzt” originally published in the *Deutsche Presse* in 1887, reprinted in Steiner, *Methodische Grundlagen der Anthroposophie*, 240-46. Steiner returned to this theme with a sharpened tone in the midst of World War I; see above all his lectures on German philosophy from late 1914 to late 1915 in Steiner, *Aus schicksaltragender Zeit* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1959). The following chapter will examine Steiner’s stance during the war as well as his theory of “national souls.”

³⁸ 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. Here Steiner claims again that the ethnic Germans in Austria are “waging a struggle for their nationality” (448). In an 1886 essay on Austro-German poetry, published in a pan-German newspaper, Steiner portrayed the Germans in the Habsburg empire as surrounded by enemies and stripped of material power but possessing an inviolable cultural superiority which flows straight out of their national soul, the “undying source of the German essence” (Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Literatur*, 115). In her vivid portrait of Austrian pan-German ideology, Hannah Arendt describes it as a form of “tribal nationalism” structured around “pseudomystical elements” and “mysterious qualities or body or soul” that “concentrates on the individual’s own soul which is considered as the embodiment of general national qualities.” Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest, 1973), 226-27.

German national capacities and objectives and those of other ethnic groups. This distinction between Germans and non-Germans is central to Steiner's later works on the spiritual significance of race and nation. While extolling "the world-historical mission of the Germans,"³⁹ Steiner in 1888 strongly emphasizes "the deep contrast" between "the national idea of the Germans and that of the non-German nationalities," defining this difference as a struggle between a cultural duty incumbent upon the Germans because of their history, and the merely chauvinist strivings of the Slavic peoples: "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."⁴⁰

This position has sometimes been construed as a principled opposition to nationalism as such. Even non-anthroposophist accounts occasionally deny that the young Steiner's stance was German nationalist.⁴¹ Such analyses may be based in part

³⁹ Rudolf Steiner, "Zwei nationale Dichter Österreichs" from *Nationale Blätter* 1890, in Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Literatur*, 127. In the same article Steiner unflatteringly contrasts "the Jewish people" to "the Germans," claiming that the Jews have no appreciation for the "religion of love," in stark contrast to the German people, who "unselfishly live for the ideal." (ibid.)

⁴⁰ Steiner, "Die deutschnationale Sache in Österreich" in Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 116; Steiner refers here explicitly to "the Slavic enemy" (which he also terms simply "our national enemy") as the bearers of this national chauvinism. Steiner then posits a general "hostility of the Slavic nations toward German culture" (117), and in the midst of condemning the Catholic church's efforts toward cross-national and cross-cultural understanding, he declares: "The German has no use for an international religion, he only understands his national religion." (118)

⁴¹ Cf. Ahern, *Sun at Midnight*, 32; Marcum, "Rudolf Steiner," 75-86; Galbreath, "Spiritual Science in an Age of Materialism," 220; Cees Leijenhorst, "Steiner, Rudolf" in Hanegraaff, ed., *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, 1084-91. A more sophisticated version of the same claim can be found in the work of Perry Myers; see Myers, *The Double-Edged Sword*, 115, and Myers, "Colonial consciousness," 395-97. Both the book and the article contain a significant error in characterizing a passage from Steiner's 1888 essay "The pan-German cause in Austria": Myers quotes (*Double-Edged Sword*, 111, and "Colonial consciousness," 396) a passage in Steiner's article criticizing "this party" because it "lacks understanding" of the proper demands of the "German spirit"; the passage in question appears in Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 112. Myers claims that Steiner's phrase "this party" refers to the *Deutschnationalen*, the pan-Germans; in fact, the passage refers unambiguously to the Liberal party, the rivals of the pan-German party. Myers thus reverses Steiner's argument on this central point, and turns him counterfactually into an opponent of the pan-Germans and a supporter of the Liberals. Myers does not mention Steiner's own explicit identification with the pan-Germans. Much of Myers' analysis in the "Colonial consciousness" article is nevertheless quite perceptive regarding Steiner's later relationship to 'Eastern' traditions and other questions.

on a foreshortened understanding of the late nineteenth-century Austrian context. The distinctive Habsburg ethnic-political crucible within which Steiner's national views were formed was undoubtedly complex, with numerous rival parties and national groups vying for influence. Within this byzantine multinational landscape, however, the Austro-Germans enjoyed overwhelming hegemony during Steiner's era. Despite widespread perceptions among ethnic Germans of a 'national' peril from non-German groups within the state, there was no real "struggle for national existence" among the Germans in the Habsburg empire in the 1880s, as Steiner held; on the contrary, ethnic Germans formed the administrative, economic, and cultural elite throughout the Austrian half of the far-flung multiethnic empire.⁴² Slav efforts toward greater access to political participation were indeed perceived as a disconcerting challenge by German nationalists, but these efforts did not pose an immediate threat to widespread German predominance under the monarchy in this period. The Germans had not lost their privileged position within the Habsburg system, and by the late 1880s, moreover, 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

⁴² Germans were not only the largest single ethnic group in the empire, they had successfully established and defended a paramount position across Austrian society. John Mason observes that the Austro-Germans were "the leading national group in the Empire and exercised an influence out of all proportion to their numbers." Mason, *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire 1867-1918* (London: Longman, 1997), 10. Mason further notes that "the modern centralized administration" of the country was "thoroughly German in character" (ibid.). "The official language of the Empire was German and the civil servants were overwhelmingly German [...] Not only was the cultural life of Vienna almost exclusively German, but the capitalist class, the Catholic hierarchy and the press were also the preserve of the Austro-Germans." (11) Robert Kann notes that German nationalism in Austria sought "the preservation and enhancement of a privileged position." Kann, *The Habsburg Empire* (New York: Octagon, 1973), 19. For further background see among others Kirchhoff, *Die Deutschen in der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*; Emil Franzel, *Der Donauraum im Zeitalter des Nationalitätenprinzips (1789-1918)* (Bern: Francke, 1958); Fredrik Lindström, *Empire and Identity: Biographies of the Austrian State Problem in the Late Habsburg Empire* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008); and Kann, *The Multinational Empire*.

intense nationalist radicalization such that figures who a decade earlier had counted as strident nationalists were now seen as ineffectual moderates.⁴³

The context for Steiner's early nationalism was thus a shifting situation in Austria-Hungary that thoroughly unsettled inherited notions of German superiority while giving rise to rival national movements among non-German communities.⁴⁴ Even if the ambitions of the Habsburgs' Slav subjects, in particular, did not constitute a genuine danger to the privileged position of the Germans at the time, Slav campaigns for increased representation and greater autonomy did appear to be a potential menace to the stability of German hegemony.⁴⁵ One outcome of this dynamic was that originally universalist visions 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.⁴⁶ Steiner's works partook of this broader transformation, and his emphasis on the German cultural mission thereby conjoined elements of cosmopolitanism with obstinate avowals of ethnic superiority.⁴⁷

⁴³ For a penetrating study of the dynamics of increasing nationalist radicalization among Austro-Germans at the time see Pieter Judson's chapter "From Liberalism to Nationalism: Inventing a German Community, 1880-85" in Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries*, 193-222.

⁴⁴ Many of these inter-ethnic struggles concerned disputes over language politics, particularly challenges to German as the sole official language in a variety of administrative contexts. Ethnic German anxieties over their predominance within the Austrian half of the empire were exacerbated by the conservative 'Iron Ring' government of Count Taaffe, which pursued a policy of mollifying Slav constituencies, particularly Czechs and Poles, thus antagonizing both the German liberal and pan-German opposition. For a relatively balanced account see William Jenks, *Austria under the Iron Ring, 1879-1893* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965).

⁴⁵ This background helps account for the virulence of Steiner's later denunciations of the doctrine of national self-determination, to be examined in the following chapter; in the context of Habsburg-dominated Eastern Europe, national self-determination spelled the end of German hegemony.

⁴⁶ Judson's *Exclusive Revolutionaries* provides a particularly perceptive analysis of this process, whereby initially universalistic German cultural/national identities in the Austrian context became (especially in course of the 1880s) more starkly contrasted against various ethnically defined Others, and also increasingly seen as inborn, natural, etc.

⁴⁷ The mature Steiner came to hold that every *Volk* has a specific cosmic mission to fulfill; the non-occultist version of this notion may perhaps be traced to Herder. Steiner's argument was that unlike other 'national characters,' which are stuck in particularity, the German national character strives toward, and indeed embodies, universalism. For background on the notion of a "German cultural mission" in Eastern Europe see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1871-1918* (Göttingen:

When viewed within this context, Steiner's early foray into national politics takes on a different significance. Much of the impetus for the middle-class variety of nationalism which Steiner adopted came from a deep sense of cultural superiority and entitlement: Germans in Austria often perceived themselves as the bearers of civilization to their supposedly backward neighbors and fellow citizens. Although the young Steiner adopted an aggressively anti-liberal stance in terms of the current Austrian politics of his day, many of his basic cultural and political assumptions were drawn from the traditions of nineteenth century German liberalism. The basic conjoining of hierarchy and equality, and of homogeneity and universalism, characteristic of this variety of liberalism strongly marked Steiner's mature thought.⁴⁸

Rather than either condemning or defending the young Steiner's views, however, a more fruitful approach may be to re-examine the particular contours of his conception of the nation. Here the Austrian origins of Steiner's national thinking are once again decisive.⁴⁹ But even across the broader framework of German-speaking Europe as a whole, the protean phenomenon of nationalism assumed a remarkable

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 117; on the idea of a German "cultural mission" more generally see Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918* vol. II (Munich: Beck, 1992), 645, 779, 803, 885. On "Germany's cultural mission in the world" as a crucial motivation for radical nationalist politics see Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 58. For comparison with other 'well-meaning' conceptions of a German 'mission' in non-European contexts see Nina Berman, *Impossible Missions? German Economic, Military, and Humanitarian Efforts in Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).⁴⁸ On this crucial conjunction within liberal theory and practice see especially Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries*.

⁴⁹ For the wider context of this question see 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); for a non-Austrian point of comparison see Eric Kurlander, *The Price of Exclusion: Ethnicity, National Identity, and the Decline of German Liberalism, 1898-1933* (New York: Berghahn, 2006), and cf. Julia Schmid, *Kampf um das Deutschtum: Radikaler Nationalismus in Österreich und dem Deutschen Reich 1890-1914* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2009). On the notion of a civilizing mission as an abiding aspect of Austro-German identity see Heinrich Lutz and Helmut Rumpel, eds., *Österreich und die deutsche Frage im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Probleme der politisch-staatlichen und soziokulturellen Differenzierung im deutschen Mitteleuropa* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1982).

variety of forms.⁵⁰ In order to comprehend Steiner's conception of the nation, both before and after his turn to esoteric spirituality, it will be helpful to keep in mind the "wide spectrum of nationalisms" that existed in Germany in the decades surrounding 1900.⁵¹

Steiner's interpretation of German national identity and national destiny can perhaps best be understood as a variant of what historian Michael Steinberg has termed "nationalist cosmopolitanism."⁵² This notion is based on "the principle that enlightenment and even more specifically cosmopolitanism are German virtues."⁵³ According to Steinberg, nationalist cosmopolitanism "assumed the cultural superiority of the Austro-Germans" and was intimately bound up with the concomitant conception

⁵⁰ Steiner's particular version of German nationalist thought may be considered an instance of "informal nationalism" in the terms of Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Formal and informal nationalism" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16 (1993), 1-25; while formal nationalism focuses primarily on the state, informal nationalism concentrates on civil society, collective events, rituals, beliefs, etc; Eriksen notes that the two forms sometimes conflict with one another. George Mosse analyzes a similar variety of nationalism as a 'secular religion' in Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975). On the related process of "kulturelle Nationbildung" see Dieter Langewiesche, *Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat* (Munich: Beck, 2000), part II. For theoretical context see Aira Kemilhäinen, *Nationalism: Problems concerning the word, the concept and classification* (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän kasvatustieteiden korkeakoulu, 1964); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); and Christian Jansen and Henning Borggräfe, *Nation – Nationalität – Nationalismus* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2007).

⁵¹ Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 168. For a useful overview of nationalist thinking within the German intelligentsia in the Wilhelmine era see Hermann Glaser, *Bildungsbürgertum und Nationalismus: Politik und Kultur im Wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Munich: DTV, 1993); for further context see also Michael Hughes, "Nationalism: Sentiment and Action" in Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 8-29; George Mosse, "Racism and Nationalism" in Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution*, 55-68; Otto Dann, *Nation und Nationalismus in Deutschland 1770-1990* (Munich: Beck, 1993); Jost Hermand and James Steakley, eds., *Heimat, Nation, Fatherland: The German Sense of Belonging* (New York: Lang, 1996); Rainer Hering, *Konstruierte Nation: Der Alldeutsche Verband 1890 bis 1939* (Hamburg: Christians, 2003); Brian Vick, "The Origins of the German Volk: Cultural Purity and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Germany" *German Studies Review* 26 (2003), 241-56; Reinhart Koselleck, "Volk, Nation, Nationalismus" in Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), 141-431. On the mutable cultural resonance in these contexts of terms such as *Geist*, *Kultur*, and *Volk* see Dominic Boyer, "The *Bildungsbürgertum* and the Dialectics of Germanness in the Long Nineteenth Century" in Boyer, *Spirit and System: Media, Intellectuals, and the Dialectic in Modern German Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 46-98.

⁵² See chapter 3, "Nationalist Cosmopolitanism" in Michael P. Steinberg, *The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival: Austria as Theater and Ideology, 1890-1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 86.

of a “German mission” in Austria, in Europe, and in the world at large.⁵⁴ “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. In other words, it is a German cultural virtue to understand foreign nations and cultures.”⁵⁵ In many ways, this diagnosis coincides with Pieter Judson’s examination of the “universalist rhetoric of German nationalism” that came to the fore among Germans in Austria in the 1880s.⁵⁶ Judson observes that German nationalists in Austria demanded “a strict assimilation to cosmopolitan German values” by other ethnic communities within the empire.⁵⁷

Such an analysis can help account for the contradictory aspects of anthroposophical thinking on ethnicity and on national questions, contradictions which are already manifest in Steiner’s early works. What emerges clearly from these early essays is that Steiner’s espousal of a unique cultural mission for the German people – a thread that runs throughout his mature anthroposophical teachings – was a prominent presence in his public career from its very 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-theosophical phase to his full-blown anthroposophist program, however, Steiner’s conception of the nation, of Germanness, and of the world-historical mission of the people of Goethe and Fichte underwent a crucial transformation. Not only were all of these categories infused with new spiritual

⁵⁴ Ibid., 90, 113.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 108.

⁵⁶ Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries*, 270. For a classic instance of the Germans-as-universal notion see Richard Wagner’s 1878 essay “Was ist deutsch?” in Tibor Kneif, ed., *Richard Wagner: Die Kunst und die Revolution* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1975); see also Kneif’s discussion of “Wagner als Ideologe des Deutschtums.”

⁵⁷ Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries*, 269. Judson’s study explores further “legacies of liberalism” such as “exclusivist ideas of cultural, national, or even racial identity” (271) and “the implicit hierarchy within which forms of difference are understood by liberal thought” (272). For a probing case study of these ambivalent moments within German liberalism, see Hans-Joachim Salecker, *Der Liberalismus und die Erfahrung der Differenz: Über die Bedingungen der Integration der Juden in Deutschland* (Bodenheim: Philo, 1999).

meaning and occult significance; they were also re-articulated within a comprehensive racial theory of the evolution of humankind and of the cosmos.

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 is the polyvalent theme of evolution, which Steiner eventually came to understand in physical, spiritual, and cosmic terms.⁵⁸ Haeckel's Monism may have played a significant role in this process.⁵⁹ Sometimes considered a variant of social Darwinism, Haeckel's theory – which also incorporated Lamarckian and Goethean elements – offered an evolutionary interpretation for a vast array of social and cultural phenomena.⁶⁰ In several respects, however, the particular variety of evolutionary

⁵⁸ For a general overview of evolutionary themes within modern religious contexts see Gerhard Schlatter, "Evolutionismus" in Hubert Cancik, Burkhard Gladigow, and Matthias Laubscher, eds., *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* vol. II (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1990), 385-93.

⁵⁹ Steiner's pamphlet *Haeckel, die Welträtsel und die Theosophie* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Theosophischer Verlag, 1909) is one of several instances of the conjunction of evolutionary and esoteric themes within Steiner's mature work. Even Steiner's occultist racial writings invoke Haeckel; see e.g. Rudolf Steiner, *The Occult Significance of Blood* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1912); original edition: Steiner, *Blut ist ein ganz besonderer Saft* (Berlin: Theosophische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1907). On Haeckel and occultism see the somewhat overwrought account in Daniel Gasman, *Haeckel's Monism and the Birth of Fascist Ideology* (New York: Lang, 1998), 59-74.

⁶⁰ The thorny historiographical debate surrounding Haeckel and the Monist movement renders simple summary of these themes difficult. For a variety of viewpoints see Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism: Social Darwinism in Ernst Haeckel and the German Monist League* (New York: 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, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (New York: Palgrave, 2004); Eric Paul Jacobsen, *From Cosmology to Ecology: The Monist World-View in Germany from 1770 to 1930* (New York: Lang, 2005), 91-212; Paul Weindling, "Ernst Haeckel, Darwinismus, and the Secularization of Nature" in James Moore, ed., *History, Humanity, and Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 311-28; Uwe Hofffeld, "Haeckelrezeption im Spannungsfeld von Monismus, Sozialdarwinismus und Nationalsozialismus" *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 21 (1999), 195-213; Robert Richards, "Ernst Haeckel's Alleged Anti-Semitism and Contributions to Nazi Biology" *Biological Theory* 2 (2007), 97-103; Robert Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle over Evolutionary Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); cf. also John Haller, "The Species Problem: Nineteenth-Century Concepts of Racial Inferiority in the Origin of Man Controversy" *American Anthropologist* 72 (1970), 1319-29, particularly 1326-27 on

thought that Steiner embraced is perhaps better understood as non-Darwinian or even anti-Darwinian.⁶¹ Indebted in part 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.⁶²

Haeckel's racial views, and for a more detailed survey of Haeckel's racial doctrines see Uwe Hoßfeld, *Geschichte der biologischen Anthropologie in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2005), 144-59. Gangolf Hübinger's nuanced overview of Monist thought acknowledges the tensions between left and right wings of the Monist movement, with the former represented by Wilhelm Ostwald (whom Steiner at times condemned as a "materialist") and the latter represented more or less by Haeckel himself. Hübinger also traces the affinities between Monism and the racial hygiene movement and analyzes "the völkisch-Social Darwinist strand of Monist cultural theory, which pushed itself aggressively into the foreground" (Hübinger, "Die monistische Bewegung," 251). For further context see Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American thought, 1860-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Paul Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Sander Giliboff, *H.G. Bronn, Ernst Haeckel, and the Origins of German Darwinism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008); Richard Evans, "In Search of German Social Darwinism: The History and Historiography of a Concept" in Manfred Berg and Geoffrey Cocks, eds., *Medicine and Modernity: Public Health and Medical Care in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 55-79; Paul Weindling, "Dissecting German Social Darwinism: Historicizing the Biology of the Organic State" *Science in Context* 11 (1998), 619-37.

⁶¹ A detailed account of the range of non-Darwinian evolutionary theories common in Steiner's day can be found in Peter Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Bowler's section "Evolution and Race" (292-97) is particularly pertinent. Cf. also Peter Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); Bowler, *The Eclipse of Darwinism: Anti-Darwinian Evolution Theories in the Decades around 1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Eve-Marie Engels, *Die Rezeption von Evolutionstheorien im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995); and Patrick Dassen and Mary Kemperink, *The Many Faces of Evolution in Europe, c. 1860-1914* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005). Steiner, like other theosophists, frequently polemicized against Darwin. At times his criticism of Darwinian approaches to evolution directly involved racial claims, 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; 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 harshly criticized 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.

⁶² For background on Romantic and Goethean predecessors to such an approach see Robert Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); for context on theories of progressive evolution see 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. For general context on nineteenth century conceptions of progress see e.g. Peter Bowler, *The Invention of Progress: The Victorians and the Past* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989). On the young

Steiner's mature conception of racial and ethnic evolution, however, owed as much to esoteric thought as it did to the biological science of his day.⁶³ Similar schemes of evolutionary progress abound within the broader occult literature, and are particularly prominent in the theosophical tradition.⁶⁴ In this sense, the development of Steiner's racial and ethnic 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 in the same period to popularize elements of the natural sciences for middle class audiences.⁶⁵ The hallmark of anthroposophical race doctrines is a 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; race itself is not merely a biological attribute but a primary vehicle of spiritual progress. To a certain extent, this spiritual re-interpretation of race was in line with other developments in

Steiner's reception of Goethe, Darwin, Haeckel, and nineteenth century evolutionary thought, see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 470-71, 487-88, 875-89. In addition to the influence of Goethe and various Romantic authors, Steiner's understanding of reincarnation, discussed below, may have been indebted to a number of prior German thinkers, above all Lessing; for a compelling counterargument, however, see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 555-64 and 758-61, but compare also *ibid.* 1685-87.

⁶³ Steiner's conception of progressive racial evolution is succinctly captured in this passage from his fundamental 1905 work *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?*: "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." Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment*, 252. For an outline of Steiner's theory of races and epochs and stages see the standard anthroposophist overview by A. P. Shepherd, *A Scientist of the Invisible: An Introduction to the Life and Work of Rudolf Steiner* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1954), 102-12.

⁶⁴ On the central role of teleological models of evolution within esoteric cosmologies see Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 53-54 and 256-60; on the importance of the notion of progressive spiritual evolution to the modern Western esoteric tradition, particularly its theosophical variants, see Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, 470-82. For theosophical perspectives 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.

⁶⁵ For divergent perspectives on these processes cf. Daum, *Wissenschaftspopularisierung im 19. Jahrhundert*; Treitel, *Science for the Soul*; Laqueur, "Why the Margins Matter"; and Zander, "Esoterische Wissenschaft um 1900."

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, from ethnology to craniometry; a reliable and internally cogent theory seemed elusive to some.⁶⁶ With a proliferation 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 some of the most influential German race theorists of the time, for example Houston Stewart Chamberlain.⁶⁷

Developing out of this fertile context, Steiner's esoteric racial doctrines combine a wide variety of incongruous elements. His voluminous but unsystematic writings on race cover the full panoply of race-as-biology, from skin color to

⁶⁶ Bruce Baum notes that by the early twentieth century the "scientific project of racial classification became marked by disarray": 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 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. For background see George Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1968), and Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1996).

⁶⁷ On Chamberlain see Field, *Evangelist of Race*; Donald Thomas, "Esoteric Religion and Racism in the Thought of Houston Chamberlain" *Journal of Popular Culture* 5 (1971), 69-81; 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 racial theories of Arthur de Gobineau. See for example Michael Biddiss, *Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970); Michael Biddiss, ed., *Gobineau: Selected Political Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); and Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999). Early critics of racial thinking noted similar patterns: "For obvious reasons a racial theory which takes much account of physical and measurable data is more likely to convey the impression of scientific exactitude; yet there are cases in which physical differences are relegated to a very subordinate position, the stress being laid upon certain mental and moral characteristics continually revealed by various peoples throughout the course of their history, and, it is assumed, susceptible of verification even at the present day." Roberts, "The Racial Interpretation of History and Politics," 477.

ostensible differences in blood, the hereditary nature of racial traits, and the possibility of racial contamination, to bone structure, facial features, and physical differences in the structure of the body and of the brain as markers of racial difference. For Steiner, however, such physical distinctions have little significance in and of themselves; what is important about purportedly racial characteristics is that they reflect and embody spiritual characteristics. In line with the broader theosophical framework, it is the esoteric significance of ethnicity and race, what they reveal about spiritual and cosmic evolution, which accounts for the central place race occupies within anthroposophical thought as initially formulated by Steiner.

Because the intricacies of Steiner's racial theory are not well known outside of anthroposophical circles, a recapitulation of its chief contours is in order.⁶⁸ Several preliminary caveats are necessary, however. First, the details of anthroposophical race doctrine were rarely the focus of non-anthroposophist attention during the period examined here. While there were numerous published critiques of theosophy and anthroposophy in Germany and elsewhere during the first several decades of the twentieth century, from a wide variety of perspectives, these critical treatments did not usually address anthroposophy's racial and ethnic tenets, much less analyze them in

⁶⁸ I have elsewhere attempted a more thorough analysis of Steiner's racial doctrines, and the present chapter builds on that examination. See Peter Staudenmaier, "Race and Redemption: Racial and Ethnic Evolution in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy" *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 11 (2008), 4-36. Several other scholarly treatments of the topic provide additional detail: 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; and 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's work is particularly perceptive in assessing the several mutually incompatible sides of Steiner's Janus face regarding race and ethnicity; see also Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 624-37, and Zander, "Rudolf Steiners Rassenlehre: Plädoyer, über die Regeln der Deutung von Steiners Werk zu reden" in Puschner and Großmann, eds., *Völkisch und national*, 145-55.

detail.⁶⁹ As we shall see in subsequent chapters, moreover, Nazi and Fascist responses to 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. Second, the extent to which the particulars of Steiner’s racial theory converged with and diverged from other accounts of race common within German intellectual cultures of the era remains a subject for further research, although some tentative hypotheses can be ventured.⁷⁰ Third, the inconsistent

⁶⁹ See e.g. the very brief reference to Steiner’s racial teachings in Wilhelm Michel’s critical appraisal of anthroposophy: 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 and Theosoph* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921), 19, 29-30, 33. Ernst Bloch’s 1935 polemical critique of anthroposophy refers in passing to Steiner’s root-race theory: Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, 174. Adolf Faut’s liberal Protestant assessment of anthroposophy does not address Steiner’s racial views; see Adolf Faut, *Romantik oder Reformation? Eine Wertung der religiösen Kräfte der Gegenwart* (Gotha: Perthes, 1925), 63-83; the same is true of R.H. Grützmacher, *Kritiker und Neuschöpfer der Religion* (Leipzig: Deichertsche, 1921), 59-72. Some of the more aggressively racist occult thinkers of the time, including the ariosophist Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, expressed a generally dismissive view 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.

⁷⁰ For general background on this topic see among others 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; Peter Weingart, Jürgen Kroll, and Kurt Bayertz, *Rasse, Blut und Gene: Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988); Ruth Römer, *Sprachwissenschaft und Rassenideologie in Deutschland* (Munich: Fink, 1989); Patrik von zur Mühlen, *Rassenideologien: Geschichte und Hintergründe* (Bonn: Dietz, 1979); Peter Becker, *Zur Geschichte der Rassenhygiene – Wege ins Dritte Reich: Sozialdarwinismus, Rassismus, Antisemitismus und völkischer Gedanke* (Stuttgart: Thieme, 1988); Robert Proctor, “From *Anthropologie* to *Rassenkunde* in the German Anthropological Tradition” in George Stocking, ed., *Bones, Bodies, Behavior: Essays on Biological Anthropology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 138-79; Benoit Massin, “From Virchow to Fischer: Physical Anthropology and “Modern Race Theories” in Wilhelmine Germany” in George Stocking, ed. *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic: Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 79-154; Ute Gerhard, “The Discursive Construction of National Stereotypes: Collective Imagination and Racist Concepts in Germany Before World War I” in Norbert Finzsch and Dietmar Schirmer, eds., *Identity and Intolerance: Nationalism, Racism, and Xenophobia in Germany and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 71-96; Eric Wolf, “Perilous Ideas: Race, Culture, People” in Wolf, *Pathways of Power: Building an Anthropology of the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 398-412; H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl, eds., *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Günther Deschner, *Gobineau und Deutschland: Der Einfluss von J.A. de Gobineaus ‘Essai sur inégalité des races humaines’ auf die deutsche Geistesgeschichte 1853-1917* (Erlangen, 1967); Jürgen Reulecke, “Rassenhygiene, Sozialhygiene, Eugenik” in Kerbs and Reulecke, eds., *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen, 197-210*; Kevin Repp, ““More Corporeal, More Concrete”: Liberal Humanism, Eugenics, and German Progressives at

and partially contradictory nature of anthroposophical race doctrine renders adequate summary difficult, and exacerbates the heated controversies that surround anthroposophical and non-anthroposophical treatments of the same material today. At times, Steiner's categories elude straightforward definition altogether. Above all, the somewhat reductive question of which features of Steiner's thinking were racist and which were non-racist or anti-racist, which has recently dominated both public and scholarly discussion of the topic, inevitably bedevils any effort to characterize anthroposophical ideas about race and ethnicity as a whole.⁷¹ With these limitations in

the Last Fin de Siècle" *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000), 683-730; André Pichot, "The Classification of Races" in Pichot, *The Pure Society: From Darwin to Hitler* (New York: Verso, 2009), 235-74; Carsten Klingemann, ed., *Rassenmythos und Sozialwissenschaft in Deutschland* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1987); Marius Turda and Paul Weindling, eds., "*Blood and homeland*": *Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007); Peter Walkenhorst, *Nation - Volk - Rasse: Radikaler Nationalismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1890-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007); 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; Geoffrey Field, "Nordic Racism" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (1977), 523-40; Michael Banton, "The Classification of Races in Europe and North America: 1700-1850" *International Social Science Journal* 39 (1987), 45-60; Ulrich Herbert, "Traditionen des Rassismus" in Lutz Niethammer, ed., *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland: Historische Einblicke, Fragen, Perspektiven* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1990), 472-88; Amos Morris-Reich, "Race, Ideas, and Ideals: A Comparison of Franz Boas and Hans F.K. Günther" *History of European Ideas* 32 (2006), 313-32; Thomas Gondermann, *Evolution und Rasse: Theoretischer und institutioneller Wandel in der viktorianischen Anthropologie* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007); George Stocking, "The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race" *Modernism/Modernity* 1 (1994), 4-16.

⁷¹ With the rise in the 1990s of public scrutiny toward anthroposophical teachings on race, as well as the appearance of several scholarly analyses of the theme, a variety of anthroposophical accounts of Steiner's racial doctrines have been published, all of them apologetic in varying degrees. Examples include: Cornelius Bohlen, "Zum Rassismus-Vorwurf gegenüber der Anthroposophie" in Müller, ed., *Anthroposophie und Christentum*, 195-212; Thomas Höfer, "Der Hammer kreist: Zur Bewertung problematischer Aussagen Rudolf Steiners" *Flensburger Hefte* 41 (Sonderheft "Anthroposophie und Rassismus" 1993), 8-22; Wolfgang Weirauch, "Über die Menschenrassen in der Darstellung Rudolf Steiners" *Flensburger Hefte* 41, 54-106; Michael Klußmann, "Zum Rassismus-Streit: 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, "Neuere Tendenzen zu geistiger Rückständigkeit oder die wachsende Salonfähigkeit von autoritärem Gesinnungszwang - Einige Bemerkungen zur 'Rassismus'-Kampagne gegen Rudolf Steiner und sein Werk" *Der Europäer*, March 2000, 10-14; Marcelo da Veiga, "Sprachliche und historische Kriterien zum Rassismusvorwurf" *Anthroposophie* December 2007, 305-14; and the contributions collected in the official anthroposophical periodical *Mitteilungen aus der anthroposophischen Arbeit in Deutschland* (Sonderheft 1995) under the collective title "Geistige Individualität und Gattungswesen: Anthroposophie in der Diskussion um das Rassenverständnis": Wenzel Michael Götte, "Das

mind, the following overview concentrates on those aspects of Steiner's racial theories that are most pertinent to the present study and its dual emphasis on the relations between occultism and fascism as refracted through the lens of race.

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.⁷² The basic outlines of this racial mythology were at first adapted from standard theosophical works, above all Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, which Steiner began reading in late 1902 at the recommendation of theosophist Marie von Sivers, his later wife.⁷³ In the course of Steiner's growing tensions with the rest of the theosophical leadership, however, he came to reject the theosophical vocabulary and in particular theosophy's emphasis on the cyclical nature of racial evolution, with its ever-repeating "rounds" and "root races," while retaining theosophical ideas about karma and reincarnation as central elements of his racial theory.⁷⁴ In place of the

Verdämmern der Rassen: Rudolf Steiners Individualismus" 4-27; Klaus-Peter Endres and Wolfgang Schad, "Die Vielfalt des Menschen: Die verschiedenen Annäherungen Rudolf Steiners an das Problem der menschlichen Rassen" 36-70; Christof Lindenau, "Wie und in welcher Absicht Rudolf Steiner über die Verschiedenheit menschlicher Rassen gesprochen hat" 71-86. The most recent such analysis is Ramon Brüll and Jens Heisterkamp, "Rudolf Steiner und das Thema Rassismus" published as a 24-page supplement to the September 2008 issue of *Info3*.

⁷² The first detailed exposition of this racial cosmology appeared in a series of articles that Steiner published in his theosophical journal *Lucifer-Gnosis* in 1904. These articles were first published in book form in 1939 under the title *Aus der Akasha-Chronik* and are 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., *Gää-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. 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).

⁷³ Cf. Rudolf Steiner, *Briefe* vol. II (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1953), 281.

⁷⁴ On Steiner's progressive conception of cosmic history in contrast to mainstream theosophy's cyclical conception see B. J. Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult from the Renaissance to the Modern Age* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 127-28; for further context see Wouter Hanegraaff's discussion of

cyclical theosophical conception of race development, Steiner proposed a more forthrightly progressive model in which racial evolution displays both a clearly advancing trajectory as well as regressive and backward trends; according to anthroposophy, higher racial forms move forward evolutionarily by overcoming and outpacing lower racial forms.⁷⁵ 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.⁷⁶ The end-point of racial evolution was thus meant to signify the conclusive overcoming of materialism, the final goal of anthroposophy’s ‘spiritual science,’ as well as the advent of authentic individuality.

Steiner gave widely differing indications about when this evolutionary process of outgrowing racial and ethnic particularity would be completed. On some occasions

esoteric theories of “evolutionist karma” in Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, 283-90. For additional background see Garry Trompf, “Macrohistory in Blavatsky, Steiner and Guenon” in Faivre and Hanegraaff, eds., *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, 269-96.

⁷⁵ Steiner spells out this notion in *The Apocalypse of St. John* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1993), original edition: Rudolf Steiner, *Die Apokalypse des Johannes* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Theosophischer Verlag, 1911). According to this book, “after the War of All against All” humankind will divide into a “race of good” and a “race of evil” (*Apocalypse of St. John*, 142); this war must happen 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) Steiner made the same point in his 1905 lecture on race as a basic theosophical concept: “Progress in human capabilities can only occur if certain so-called higher grades of human existence are attained at the expense of the regression of earlier stages of development.” (Steiner, *Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie*, 138) See also Rudolf Steiner, *The Temple Legend: Freemasonry and Related Occult Movements* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1985), 191-92.

⁷⁶ See e.g. Rudolf Steiner, *The Universal Human* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1990). This theme is repeated in a number of Steiner’s other works; the following passage is representative: “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 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.” Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophy of the Rosicrucian* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1966), 130. See also Rudolf Steiner, *Der irdische und der kosmische Mensch* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1964), 149-65.

he claimed that “in our age the racial character is gradually being overcome.”⁷⁷ On other occasions he claimed that this would not occur until thousands or even millions of years in the future.⁷⁸ According to Steiner’s theory of cosmic evolution, the

⁷⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *The Mission of the Individual Folk Souls in Relation to Teutonic Mythology* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2005), 76. The first printed version of these 1910 lectures is a 1911 manuscript edition titled *Die Mission einzelner Volksseelen im Zusammenhange mit der germanisch-nordischen Mythologie*; this edition retains the standard theosophical vocabulary that Steiner used before his break with the Theosophical Society. The second edition of the book is Rudolf Steiner, *Die Mission einzelner Volksseelen im Zusammenhange mit der germanisch-nordischen Mythologie* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1922). According to Christian Gahr, *Die Anthroposophie Steiners* (Erlangen: Döres, 1929), 370, the first published edition of Steiner’s revised version of the text appeared in February 1918. Steiner reported that he gave a copy of the text to Prince Max von Baden when they met in January 1918, and anthroposophist sources say that Steiner revised the text for this occasion; see e.g. Wehr, *Rudolf Steiner*, 259, and Stewart Easton, *Rudolf Steiner: Herald of a New Epoch* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1980), 223. The first English edition of the book is Rudolf Steiner, *The Mission of Folk-Souls in connection with Germanic and Scandinavian Mythology* (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Company, 1929). The second English edition was published by the Rudolf Steiner Press in London in 1970; it is identical to the 2005 edition. Steiner’s pronouncements about the currently waning significance of race were part of his self-distancing from more orthodox theosophical models of racial evolution. The following passage from December 1909 is unusually forthright: “[W]hat is being prepared for the sixth epoch is precisely the stripping away of race. That is essentially what is happening. Therefore, in its fundamental nature, the anthroposophical movement, which is to prepare the sixth period, must cast aside the division into races. It must seek to unite people of all races and nations, and to bridge the divisions and differences between various groups of people. The old point of view of race has a physical character, but what will prevail in the future will have a more spiritual character. That is why it is absolutely essential to understand that our anthroposophical movement is a spiritual one. It looks to the spirit and overcomes the effects of physical differences through the force of being a spiritual movement. Of course, any movement has its childhood illnesses, so to speak. Consequently, in the beginning of the theosophical movement the earth was divided into seven periods of time, one for each of the seven root races, and each of these root races was divided into seven sub-races. These seven periods were said to repeat in a cycle so that one could always speak of seven races and seven sub-races. However, we must get beyond the illnesses of childhood and understand clearly that the concept of race has ceased to have any meaning in our time.” (Steiner, *The Universal Human*, 12-13) The last sentence is mistranslated; the original does not say that race has already ceased to have any meaning in our time, but that this process is currently underway: “daß der Rassenbegriff aufhört eine jegliche Bedeutung zu haben gerade in unserer Zeit.” Rudolf Steiner, *Die tieferen Geheimnisse des Menschheitswerdens im Lichte der Evangelien* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1986), 152; a more accurate translation would be “the concept of race is ceasing to have any meaning in our era.” At the conclusion of the same lecture Steiner explains that “the first overcoming, the full overcoming of the race concept” will not occur until “the sixth cultural epoch,” several thousand years in the future (ibid. 165). These statements are in any case directly contradicted by Steiner’s other claims, both before and after his break with mainstream theosophy, about the continuing future spiritual and physical significance of race.

⁷⁸ In a June 1907 lecture Steiner explained: “Then, inasmuch as we evolve from the fifth into the sixth and then into the seventh epoch, the ancient connections of race and blood will be increasingly lost. Humanity will become freer of physical ties in order to form groups from the aspect of the spirit. It was a bad habit in theosophy to speak of races as if they would always remain. The concept of race will lose its meaning in the near future, which means over the next few thousand years.” Rudolf Steiner, *Rosicrucian Wisdom: An Introduction* (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2001), 145. In a corresponding footnote the editors clarify that the phrase “the next few thousand years” has been

existence of racial diversity is itself a deviation from the proper path of human spiritual and physical development. The simultaneous existence of different racial groups was the result of the untimely interference of demonic forces, named Lucifer and Ahriman in anthroposophical terminology, 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.⁷⁹ Since the divine plan for evolution was unable to unfold in this way, however, the simultaneous existence of different racial groups, occupying “different stages of development” and displaying very different “physical and mental characteristics,” necessitated a new approach to racial evolution.⁸⁰

amended from the original “millions of years”: “The extant notes here say ‘millions of years’.” (171) The current German edition confirms this; see Rudolf Steiner, *Die Theosophie des Rosenkreuzers* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1997), 144 and associated footnote on 168 (“Millionen von Jahren”). The original German edition dates from 1929 and was edited by Marie Steiner: Rudolf Steiner, *Die Theosophie des Rosenkreuzers* (Berlin: Anthroposophische Bücherstube, 1929). An earlier authorized English translation of the book entirely omits the phrase referring to thousands or millions of years, and reads simply: “The concept of race loses its meaning in the immediate future.” Steiner, *Theosophy of the Rosicrucian*, 145.

⁷⁹ Steiner develops this point with particular emphasis in *The Universal Human*, 73-77, among others. Here Steiner explains that had cosmic evolution 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 and perfected 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. 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 latter-day followers. The prominent American anthroposophist Stephen Usher, for example, 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. Steiner’s own claims along these lines are complicated by his later statements, in the same text, that the interference of Lucifer and Ahriman had been divinely foreseen all along; cf. Steiner, *The Universal Human*, 83-85.

⁸⁰ Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 46.

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 anthroposophical perspective, "we are to acquire new capacities through repeated incarnations in the successive races," a process governed by Steiner's occult conception of karma.⁸¹ This racialized version of reincarnation bears important similarities to other varieties of western esotericism, though it differs significantly from many non-western models of reincarnation.⁸²

⁸¹ Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 231. For a useful scholarly summary of the anthroposophical understanding of reincarnation see Friedrich Huber, "Die Reinkarnationsvorstellungen in den asiatischen Religionen und im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts" *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 44 (1992), 15-32, particularly 18-20 on Steiner's model of reincarnation. Huber emphasizes the progressivist element in Steiner's theory, its focus on development toward successively higher stages. A thorough and perceptive analysis of theosophical and anthroposophical conceptions of reincarnation, with extensive attention to Steiner's theory, is available in Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 455-94. For comparison to often quite divergent South Asian conceptions see Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, ed., *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). For general background see Helmut Zander, *Geschichte der Seelenwanderung in Europa: alternative religiöse Traditionen von der Antike bis heute* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999), and 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. On attitudes toward reincarnation among German thinkers revered by Steiner see Lieselotte Kurth-Voigt, *Continued Existence, Reincarnation, and the Power of Sympathy in Classical Weimar* (Rochester: Camden House, 1999), and Ernst Benz, "Die Reinkarnationslehre in Dichtung und Philosophie der deutschen Klassik und Romantik" *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 9 (1957), 150-73. An anthroposophical perspective can be found in Emil Bock, *Wiederholte Erdenleben: Die Wiederverkörperungsidee in der deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1932). On the broader dynamic of German borrowings from putatively Indian sources see Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*; Nina Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900* (Stuttgart: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 1997); Nicholas Germana, *The Orient of Europe: The Mythical Image of India and Competing Images of German National Identity* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009).

⁸² A recent study of esoteric conceptions of reincarnation in nineteenth century France notes: "Believers in reincarnation imagined an evolutionary, perfectible soul, improving as it moved through a series of lives." Lynn Sharp, *Secular Spirituality: Reincarnation and Spiritism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), xv. Sharp's final chapter "Spiritism, Occultism, Science: Meanings of Reincarnation in the Fin de Siècle," 163-200, is also pertinent. On the contrasts between such Western notions of reincarnation and karma and their purported Eastern counterparts see among others Viswanathan, "The Ordinary Business of Occultism," as well as the considerably less critical treatment in Ronald Neufeldt, "Karma and Rebirth in the Theosophical Movement" in Neufeldt, ed., *Karma and Rebirth: Post Classical Developments* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 233-55. For more general comparison see the incisive analysis by Jörg Wichmann, "Das theosophische Menschenbild und seine indischen Wurzeln" *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 35 (1983), 12-33, as well as the chapter "Theosophie und Anthroposophie" in Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Das Indienbild deutscher Denker* (Stuttgart: Koehler, 1960), 186-218. J.S. Speyer, *Die indische Theosophie* (Leipzig: Haessel, 1914), 302-27, offers an early detailed scholarly review of theosophical claims to

Within Steiner's system, the phenomena of racial evolution and the evolution of individual souls are so intimately intertwined that anthroposophical sources sometimes treat them as essentially synonymous.⁸³ In Steiner's words:

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.⁸⁴

various South Asian intellectual traditions, emphasizing the extent to which western theosophists imputed to their ostensible Indian sources notions of progress and evolution that are often absent from the Indian sources themselves. A similar critique of theosophical versions of Indian religious thought can be found in Friedrich Max Müller, "Esoteric Buddhism" *The Nineteenth Century* 33 (1893), 767-88. For an extended comparison of European occultist versions of reincarnation to various non-European and indigenous conceptions of reincarnation see Gugenberger and Schweidlenka, *Mutter Erde, Magie und Politik*, 147-48. Gugenberger and Schweidlenka argue that western conceptions of reincarnation and karma, including anthroposophy's, are typically hierarchical, elitist, linear, meritocratic, often racially stratified, and based on an evolutionary model borrowed from the natural world. In contrast, many traditional conceptions of reincarnation and karma are egalitarian, cyclical, and dynamic, emphasizing mutual interdependence and commonalities among people of all 'races,' as well as non-human creatures. Gugenberger and Schweidlenka, whose attitude toward Steiner is relatively sympathetic, also note that "Steiner posited a strictly hierarchical evolutionary chain" based on the theosophical root-race model, with "Germanic-Nordic" peoples at the top (ibid., 144).

⁸³ See e.g. Adolf Arenson, *Leitfaden durch 50 Vortragszyklen Rudolf Steiners* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1961); the entry for "Seelenentwicklung" or 'soul development' (812) is entirely about racial evolution. It reads in full: "See also 'race evolution'. A soul can be incarnated in a race that is declining, but if this soul does not make itself evil, it does not need to incarnate again in a backwards-sinking race; it will reincarnate in a race that is climbing higher. Those souls which do not strive to move out of physical materiality will be held back in the race "through their own weight," that is, they will incarnate again in the same race (Ahasver)." The allusion to Ahasver refers to Steiner's repeated reliance on the antisemitic myth of Ahasuerus or the Wandering Jew as a prime illustration of racial stagnation and decadence. In Arenson's compendium see also the extensive entry for "Rassenentwicklung" or 'racial evolution' (779-82), as well as the entries for "Arische Rasse" or 'Aryan race' (59), and "Wurzelrassen" or 'root races' (956). The 1961 edition of Arenson's book is a photomechanical reproduction of the original 1930 edition; Arenson, a leading early anthroposophist, prepared the guide in collaboration with Steiner himself.

⁸⁴ Steiner, "Die Grundbegriffe der Theosophie. Menschenrassen" in Steiner, *Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie*, 133. Steiner emphasizes 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." (ibid., 143: "daß nur die fortschreitende Rasse sich in der entsprechenden Weise hinaufentwickeln kann.") It is noteworthy 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" is "the truly civilized race" (ibid., 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

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.⁸⁵ Moreover, physical 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."⁸⁶ In addition, the emphasis on racial difference as a corollary to spiritual progress sometimes led Steiner to denigrate 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.⁸⁷

earlier levels; thus we can see that the peoples of Asia and America are remnants of the various Atlantean races." (ibid., 145)

⁸⁵ The notion that individual souls are responsible for their own racial advance or decline is fundamental to anthroposophy's conception of spiritual evolution. Steiner writes: "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 races 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." (Steiner, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 80)

⁸⁶ Rudolf Steiner, *The Riddle of Humanity: The Spiritual Background of Human History* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1990), 219.

⁸⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Science as a Foundation for Social Forms* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1986),

122. In similar terms, anthroposophist Ernst Boldt derided what he took to be a severely distorted presentation of Steiner's views by Karl Jellinek: "Rudolf Steiner's idea of a threefold State-organism is about as far removed from Jellinek's Utopian nonsense about 'cosmo-political democracy' and 'unified

These themes recur throughout Steiner's works.⁸⁸ Through the process of racial and ethnic karma, and the correlation between soul-spiritual qualities and racial traits, the physical variety and diversity within the human species are invested with powerful esoteric significance, under the rubric of progressive evolution. Indeed such considerations provide an essential key to the anthroposophical understanding of history. As the incarnating souls "became steadily better and better," Steiner explains,

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

peoples' or 'world-state' as it is from the Brotherhood of the Human Races" (Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner*, 148). For Jellinek's detailed and entirely sympathetic presentation of Steiner's teachings see Karl Jellinek, *Das Weltengeheimnis* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1921).

⁸⁸ The timbre of Steiner's racial teachings may be best apprehended in the original; a representative passage reads as follows: "So hat jede Rasse ihre Aufgabe in der Menschheitsentwicklung. Die Aufgabe der unsrigen, der fünften Haupt- oder Wurzelrasse besteht darin, zu den vier Gliedern der menschlichen Wesenheit das hinzuzubringen, was man das Manasische nennt, das heißt, durch Begriffe und Ideen das Verständnis zu wecken. Jede Rasse hat ihre Aufgabe: diejenige der atlantischen war die Ausbildung des Ich. Unsere, die fünfte Wurzelrasse, die nachatlantische Zeit, hat das Manas, das Geistselbst auszubilden. Mit dem Untergang der Atlantis gingen aber deren Errungenschaften nicht unter, sondern es wurde von all dem, was in der atlantischen Pflanzschule der Adepten vorhanden war, das Wesentlichste von einem kleinen Kern von Menschen mitgenommen. Diese kleine Masse zog unter der Führung des Manu in die Gegend der heutigen Wüste Gobi. Und diese kleine Schar bereitete nun Nachbildungen der früheren Kultur und Lehre vor, aber mehr im Verstandeshaften. Es waren die in Gedanken und Zeichen umgesetzten früheren geistigen Kräfte. Von dort, von diesem Zentrum zogen dann, wie Radian, wie Strahlungen, die verschiedenen Kulturströmungen aus. [...] Aber unsere Aufgabe besteht heute darin, das Okkulte im Manas, im reinsten Element des Gedankens zu erfassen. Das Erfassen des Spirituellen in diesem feinsten Destillat des Gehirns ist die eigentliche Mission unserer Zeit. Diesen Gedanken so kraftvoll zu machen, daß er etwas von okkultur Kraft hat, das ist die uns gestellte Aufgabe, um unseren Platz für die Zukunft ausfüllen zu können." Steiner, *Zur Geschichte und aus den Inhalten der ersten Abteilung der esoterischen Schule 1904-1914* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1996), 394. Steiner concludes: "Für jeden einzelnen und für das allgemeine Menschtum ist der Weg zur Weisheit, zur Bruderschaft nur zu erreichen durch Erkenntnis. Wir haben nun diesen Weg durch drei Mysterienarten hindurch verfolgt. Theosophie muß es dazu bringen, daß ein kleiner Menschheitskern Verständnis für das Gesagte hat, um in der sechsten Rasse das Verständnis dafür in der Masse zu wecken. Es ist dies die Aufgabe, welche die Theosophie zu erfüllen hat. Ein kleiner Teil der fünften Wurzelrasse wird die Entwicklung vorausnehmen, er wird Manas spiritualisieren, das Geistselbst entfalten. Der große Teil aber wird den Gipfel der Selbstsucht erreichen. Jener Menschheitskern nun, der das Geistselbst entwickelt, wird der Same der sechsten Wurzelrasse sein, und die Vorgesrittensten dieses Kernes, die aus der Menschheit hervorgegangenen Meister, wie wir sie nennen, werden dann die Menschheit führen. Nach diesem Ziel hin strebt die theosophische Bewegung für Geist-Erkentnis." (401)

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.⁸⁹

The steady advance of racial-spiritual progress depends, however, on the willingness of each person, each soul, to embrace the occult version of Christianity that Steiner preached. Failure or refusal 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

⁸⁹ Rudolf Steiner, *Christus und die menschliche Seele* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1997), 93. For Steiner, individual karma regulates the evolutionary outcome, which is overseen by higher spiritual beings; the souls that are to progress are those that reject materialism and acknowledge the supersensible worlds revealed by anthroposophy, while souls which do not recognize these supersensible worlds are doomed to evolutionary regression: “The beings of the higher hierarchies who guide and ordain the progressive course of evolution are endowed with certain forces that make this course possible. [...] We discover that there are already souls today who, when they enter the spiritual world after death, are so constituted that the spirits of the higher hierarchies who foster progressive evolution cannot do anything with them. I have often emphasized that there are souls today who are in no way inclined to develop an understanding of the supersensible worlds in accordance with our day and age, who are thoroughly materialistic and who have completely cut themselves off from the spiritual world. It is precisely such souls who after death make it difficult for the beings of the spiritual hierarchies to do anything with them. These spiritual beings of the higher hierarchies possess forces destined for the progressive course of evolution. Souls who have closed themselves completely against this progressive course are also too heavy, so heavy in fact that the beings of the higher hierarchies cannot overcome the weight. We need not despair today in respect to such souls. The real danger point will occur in the sixth post-Atlantean epoch, and ultimately they will be totally cast off from progressive evolution during the Venus period. If, however, nothing else were to intervene, such souls would have to be cast off earlier from progressive evolution because they would be totally useless to the beings of the higher hierarchies.” Rudolf Steiner, *Life Between Death and Rebirth* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1968), 235. Steiner specifies that accepting the “Christ impulse” is essential to avoid evolutionary ruin: “Obstacles arise against the challenge of progressive evolution that sounds forth to mankind. A considerable number of human beings in our time are as yet unable to find a deep feeling relationship to the Christ impulse even though the earth has reached a stage of development when the human soul needs the Christ impulse if it is to go through life between death and rebirth in the right way. Souls who go through the gate of death without some connection with the Christ impulse are in danger because the leaders of progress, the beings of the higher hierarchies, are unable to bring their forces to bear on souls who have torn themselves out of the stream of evolution and who, as a result of their strange existence, destine themselves to ruin.” (ibid., 236)

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.⁹⁰

Steiner's statements along these lines were not limited to general spiritual-evolutionary principles; he offered an array of concrete assessments of specific racial and ethnic groups. His various pronouncements on the topic comprise a range of normative judgements, some of them arranged in a hierarchical scale and many of them plainly pejorative.⁹¹ At times these assertions were broad categorizations; Steiner

⁹⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *Das Hereinwirken geistiger Wesenheiten in den Menschen* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2001), 174. Steiner insisted on a similar point in related contexts as well: "All materialistically thinking souls work on the production of evil race-formations, and what is done of a spiritual nature causes the bringing forth of a good race. Just as mankind has brought forth that which has retrogressed in the animals, plants and minerals, so will a portion split off and represent the evil part of humanity. [...] Just as older conditions which have degenerated to the ape species seem grotesque to us today, so do materialistic races remain at the standpoint of evil, and will people the earth as evil races. It will lie entirely with humanity as to whether a soul will remain in the bad race or will ascend by spiritual culture to a good race. [...] A man would neglect his duty to mankind if he did not wish to become acquainted with the forces which work in the direction of right evolution or against it. [...] One who tries to carry this knowledge into the direct practice of everyday life, furthers the advance of the coming evolution of humanity. It is extremely important for us to learn more and more to put into practice what exists as the conception of spiritual science. So you see, the Spiritual Movement has a quite definite goal, namely, to mould future humanity in advance. And the goal can be reached in no other way than through the acceptance of spiritual wisdom. This is the thought that lives in the mind of one who conceives spiritual science as the great task of mankind. He thinks of it as inseparable from evolution and he regards it not as an object of desire but as a task and duty that is laid upon him. And the more we acknowledge this, the more rapidly do we approach the future form of humanity in the Sixth Age. As at that time in ancient Atlantis, in the neighbourhood of modern Ireland, the advanced human beings were drawn to the East in order to found the new civilisations, so have we now the task of working towards the great moment in the Sixth Age, when humanity will undertake a great spiritual ascent." Steiner, *Theosophy of the Rosicrucian*, 150-51.

⁹¹ For further detailed statements of Steiner's racial doctrines see among others the following: Steiner, "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, *Christus und die menschliche Seele*, 88-94; 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:

taught, for instance, 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.⁹² Other ethnic and racial assessments were more concrete and occasionally quite specific. Jews and Chinese, for example, served as paradigmatic examples of racial stagnation.⁹³ Steiner characterized indigenous peoples as decadent, stunted, and degenerate.⁹⁴ Black Africans, meanwhile, were portrayed as highly physical creatures, spiritually immature, and lacking a relationship to the higher spiritual realms. Such claims recapitulated standard European notions about black people as savages, while carrying the additional significance of anthroposophy's stratified model of spiritual evolution.

“Negroes,” Steiner taught, “cut themselves off completely from the spiritual world.”⁹⁵ 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, which

Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1993), 132-33, 152-53; Steiner, *Gegensätze in der Menschheitsentwicklung* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1967), 26-39, 151-65.

⁹² Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, 56.

⁹³ Jews, in Steiner's eyes, were closely associated with atavistic “blood ties” and a “group-soul” rather than true individuality; this is why Jews stubbornly insisted on remaining Jews rather than abandoning Jewishness and being absorbed into gentile communities, as Steiner believed they should. In Steiner's esoteric evolutionary system, moreover, the Jewish people had fulfilled their cosmic mission two millennia ago and ought to have disappeared after the coming of Christ. Steiner further held that “The Jews have a great gift for materialism, but little for recognition of the spiritual world” (Steiner, *From Beetroot to Buddhism*, 59). 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. Rudolf Steiner, *Menschheitsentwicklung und Christus-Erkenntnis* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1981), 186, and Steiner, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 140. For markedly similar claims see 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; cf. Chamberlain, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* vol. II (New York: Howard Fertig, 1977), 248-57. For background on racial attitudes toward Asians in Imperial Germany see Heinz Gollwitzer, *Die gelbe Gefahr: Geschichte eines Schlagworts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 163-218.

⁹⁴ 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*, 244; and Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 46. Steiner described Native Americans, for example, as a “decadent side branch” of evolution, located evolutionarily between Europeans and apes: Steiner, *Menschheitsentwicklung und Christus-Erkenntnis*, 245.

⁹⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *Vergangenheits- und Zukunftsimpulse im sozialen Geschehen* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1980), 149.

mainly brings younger souls to incarnation.”⁹⁶ In contrast to the spiritually mature Europeans, “The black or Negro race is substantially determined by these childhood characteristics.”⁹⁷ At times Steiner offered extended and graphic descriptions of the Negro’s powerful physical drives and their cosmic origins.⁹⁸ He criticized the presence of black people in Europe and its degrading spiritual effects, decrying in particular the stationing of French colonial troops on German soil during the occupation of the Rhineland in the aftermath of World War One. Several of his lectures during the Rhineland occupation, at the height of German outrage against the deployment of African soldiers in Germany, invoke this theme.⁹⁹ In a February 1923 discussion with the original group of Waldorf teachers Steiner declared:

⁹⁶ Rudolf Steiner, *Occult History*, 33; the following sentence characterizes the “coloured races” as “uncivilised races.” This claim is consonant with Steiner’s overarching 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) “Is the perfect spirit to have the same antecedents as the imperfect one? Does a Goethe have the same antecedents as any Hottentot? The antecedents of an ape are as unlike those of a fish as are the antecedents of Goethe's mind unlike those of a savage. The spiritual ancestry of Goethe's soul is a different one from that of the savage soul.” Rudolf Steiner, *Christianity as Mystical Fact* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1947), 52.

⁹⁷ Steiner, *The Mission of the Folk Souls*, 75. Such passages bear comparison with Hegel’s account of racial developmental differences and of “Negroes” as a “race of children”; for extensive excerpts see Bernasconi and Lott, eds., *The Idea of Race*, 38-44.

⁹⁸ Consider the following passage from 1923: “Let us look first at the blacks in Africa. These blacks in Africa have the peculiar characteristic that they absorb all light and all warmth from space. They take it in. And this light and warmth cannot penetrate through the whole body, because after all a person is always a person, even if he is black. It does not penetrate through the whole body, but lingers on the surface of the skin, and the skin itself thus turns black. So a black in Africa is therefore a person who absorbs as much warmth and light as possible from space and assimilates it within himself. In this way the energies of the cosmos affect the whole person. Everywhere he takes in light and warmth, everywhere. He assimilates it inside of himself. There must be something there that helps him in this assimilation. Now you see, what helps him in this assimilation is his rear-brain. In the Negro the rear-brain is therefore especially developed. It goes through his spinal cord. And this is able to assimilate all the light and warmth that are inside a person. Therefore everything connected to the body and the metabolism is strongly developed in the Negro. He has, as they say, powerful physical drives, powerful instincts. The Negro has a powerful instinctual life. And because he actually has the sun, light, and warmth on his body surface, in his skin, his whole metabolism operates as if he were being cooked inside by the sun. That is where his instinctual life comes from. The Negro is constantly cooking inside, and what feeds this fire is his rear-brain.” Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, 55; see also the accompanying illustration on 56. The same text explains that while black people are distinguished by their “rear-brain,” yellow and brown people display an especially pronounced “mid-brain,” and white people a fully developed “fore-brain.”

⁹⁹ For context on German reactions to the deployment of African troops in the Rhineland occupation see 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

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.¹⁰⁰

In a March 1923 lecture in Dornach surveying the various racial groups on the earth, Steiner offered definite instruction about which races belong where:

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.¹⁰¹

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 'Utschebebbes' 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); Jared Poley, *Decolonization in Germany: Weimar Narratives of Colonial Loss and Foreign Occupation* (Oxford: Lang, 2005); 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), 473-508.¹⁰⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *Faculty Meetings With Rudolf Steiner* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1998), 558-59.

¹⁰¹ Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, 52-53; the last sentence reads: "Die Negerrasse gehört nicht zu Europa, und es ist natürlich nur ein Unfug, daß sie jetzt in Europa eine so große Rolle spielt." In addition to contextual factors such as the 'black horror' campaign sparked by the Rhineland occupation, it is worth noting that an array of racial theories from German authors appeared during this period. H.F.K. Günther's *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* appeared in 1922, while Walter Scheidt's *Beiträge und Sammelarbeiten zur Rassenkunde Europas* and Gustav Kraitschek's *Rassenkunde mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des deutschen Volkes* appeared in 1923. At the same time, a number of important works appeared directly challenging such racial theories, including Franz Boas' *Kultur und Rasse* published in 1922.

In a December 1922 lecture in Dornach, Steiner provided a striking 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 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!¹⁰²

Among anthroposophists, such concerns were sometimes expressed as a fear of the “negroification” of German culture and of Europe as a whole.¹⁰³ In anthroposophy’s vision of physical-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.

¹⁰² 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.

¹⁰³ Even some of 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 such as “Der Neger in Berlin” and “Vom “Neger” in Europa” from the early 1920s; these pieces combine an aestheticized awe toward black people’s supposedly superior physicality with open revulsion at their increasing presence in Europe, evidently viewing this as part of a shadowy international conspiracy. Belyj thus decries 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” threatens 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 laments that Berlin is becoming “eine Negerstadt.” (67) Belyj was at the time a prominent anthroposophist; he first met Steiner in 1912 and became a long-term member of Steiner’s ‘Esoteric School.’ For background see Gerd Koenen and Lew Kopelew, eds., *Deutschland und die Russische Revolution 1917-1924* (Munich: Fink, 1998), 659-63.

These premises nonetheless left ample room for ambiguities within the anthroposophical conception of racial-ethnic progress. Two examples may serve to put these ambiguities into sharper relief: Steiner's philosemitic articles from his transitional period in 1900-1901, and his remarks about the "occult significance" of "the race question" in the midst of Germany's military campaign in its colony in South-West Africa during Steiner's tenure as leader of the German theosophical movement. Steiner's brief series of philosemitic articles was published in the *Mittheilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* between September and December 1901.¹⁰⁴ 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 *Volk* and argued that fully Germanized Jews can 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 basic insistence on the possibility of radical assimilation, through which Jewishness itself would dissolve into Germanness, contrasted distinctly with the increasingly aggressive and racialized versions of antisemitism that eventually came to mark the era.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ 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, as examined below. For further background on the *Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* see the new study by 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), and the somewhat more critical earlier study by 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.

¹⁰⁵ On the profound differences between Jewish and gentile conceptions of assimilation at the time see Christian Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). Steiner's brief association with the *Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* seems to have involved a learning process, reflected in the timing and the developing content of his contributions to the organization's journal. The first three of his seven pieces appeared in the September 1901 issues, beginning with volume 11, number 37 of the *Mittheilungen aus dem Verein*

Steiner's disquisition on "The Occult Significance of Blood," on the other hand, reinforced several important German assumptions about race in colonial contexts. Originally presented as a public lecture in Berlin on October 25, 1906, Steiner published the text a few months later in 1907.¹⁰⁶ The timing, once again, is revealing: Steiner's remarks were delivered in the midst of the final phase of the genocidal German military campaign against the Herero and Nama peoples in the German colony of South-West Africa, and during the run-up to the so-called "Hottentot election" of January 1907, in which imperialism and colonialism were central issues.¹⁰⁷ Early in the text, one of Steiner's central passages reads:

zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus (September 11, 1901), 307; these initial contributions are all short pieces, the last one three paragraphs total. Steiner then has the lead article in the October 2, 1901 issue, a slightly longer piece titled "Der Wissenschaftsbeweis der Antisemiten" (*Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* vol. 11 no. 40, 331-32), in which Steiner attempts to exonerate the work of philosopher Friedrich Paulsen from the charge of antisemitic tendencies. In a footnote attached to the article, the editors of the *Mitteilungen* distance themselves from Steiner's assessment of Paulsen's work. At this point, after four articles by Steiner in four consecutive issues, his contributions cease for six weeks, resuming in mid-November with a longer serialized essay titled "Verschämter Antisemitismus" beginning on the second page of the November 13, 1901 issue (*Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* vol. 11 no. 46, 380) and extending through the December 4, 1901 issue (*Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* vol. 11 no. 49, 405-06). In this essay, Steiner re-examines the work of Paulsen (whom German antisemites had claimed as one of their own) much more critically and in considerably more detail. The impression that arises from reading the pieces in sequence is that the editors of the journal had perhaps confronted Steiner about his understanding of antisemitism and its ideological functions, and that Steiner tried to take the lesson to heart. (For an indication of Paulsen's decidedly negative attitudes toward Jews, see Friedrich Paulsen, *An Autobiography*, edited by Theodor Lorenz, New York: Columbia University Press, 1938, 266-67, 294, 383-84, 428, 434, 484-85.) Steiner's final contribution appeared in the *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus*, December 26, 1901, under the telling title "Idealismus gegen Antisemitismus"; it is another attempt to absolve a German author, Lothar von Kunowski, of antisemitism, in part by celebrating Kunowski's recuperation of German cultural superiority. Steiner's essays for the journal consistently display a German nationalist tone; the type of antisemitism that aroused his ire was the organized political variety and the concomitant efforts by some of the more plebian antisemites to lay claim to German high culture and philosophy in support of their cause. Steiner's chief concern appears to be defending the dignity of German literary and philosophical traditions, and in particular guarding the legacy of German Idealism from cooptation by antisemitic demagogues. Finally, it may also be noteworthy that Steiner's series of explicitly philosemitic articles came to an end just as he was turning toward theosophy.

¹⁰⁶ Steiner, *Blut ist ein ganz besonderer Saft*; 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.

¹⁰⁷ 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. An informative popular account is available in Mark Cocker, *Rivers of Blood, Rivers of Gold: Europe's*

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 that of colonisation, which crops up wherever civilised races come into contact with the uncivilised: namely — To what extent are uncivilized 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.¹⁰⁸

Conquest of Indigenous Peoples (New York: Grove Press, 1998), 269-370. 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. See also Zimmerer and Zeller, eds., *Genocide in German South-West Africa* (Monmouth: Merlin Press, 2008), and Gesine Krüger, *Kriegsbewältigung und Geschichtsbewußtsein: Realität, Deutung und Verarbeitung des deutschen Kolonialkriegs in Namibia 1904 bis 1907* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999). This context is crucial; in Germany in the autumn of 1906 and early 1907, Steiner’s references to colonialism, the “question of race,” and “Negroes” and “savages” could be readily linked by all listeners and readers to the Herero and Nama, as well as to the concurrent Maji Maji war in German East Africa. For background on the latter conflict see Felicitas Becker and Jigal Beez, eds., *Der Maji-Maji-Krieg in Deutsch-Ostafrika, 1905-1907* (Berlin: Links, 2005). Steiner’s occasional references to “Hottentots” in other works draw on the same shared cultural background. For an insightful analysis of this theme see Nicholas Hudson, “‘Hottentots’ and the evolution of European racism” *Journal of European Studies* 34 (2004), 308-32.
¹⁰⁸ Steiner, *Occult Significance of Blood*, 13-14. Much of the rest of the essay presents standard theosophical teachings about the physical body, the etheric body, and the astral body, the relationship between the ‘I’ and the blood, and the intertwinement of macrocosm and microcosm. 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.

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.¹⁰⁹

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.¹¹⁰ 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.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 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 in this text is comparable to the ambivalent stance of both Gobineau and Chamberlain regarding the same question. At times, however, Steiner’s position tacitly condoned genocide, as in this passage from 1910: “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)

¹¹⁰ Background on this complex of ideas is available in Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races 1800–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), and Richard Weikart, “Progress through Racial Extermination: Social Darwinism, Eugenics, and Pacifism in Germany, 1860-1918” *German Studies Review* 26 (2003), 273-94.

¹¹¹ For context on the “Eingeborenenfrage,” “Rassenmischung,” “Mischehen” and so forth see Pascal Grosse, *Kolonialismus, Eugenik und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland 1850-1918* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2000), 96-192; 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

According to the passages above, 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 assimilating civilization through contact with colonizers. The job of the colonists is, apparently, to figure out which is which and proceed accordingly.¹¹² In the heyday of race-thinking and colonialism, Steiner gave these ideas about blood, race, and civilization an occult interpretation, but did not alter the basic terms at stake.

Long after his departure from the established theosophical movement, and during the period when his followers proposed him as Germany’s savior, Steiner continued to elaborate his racial doctrines as a decisive component of his broader esoteric teachings. In a 1923 lecture on “Color and the Races of Humankind” Steiner declared:

Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop, eds., *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and its Legacy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 107-23; Jan Henning Böttger, “Zivilisierung der ‘Vernichtung’: ‘Hererokrieg’, ‘Eingeborene’ und ‘Eingeborenenrecht’ im Kolonialdiskurs” *Zeitschrift für Genozidforschung* 4 (2003), 22-63; Jürgen Zimmerer, “Der koloniale Musterstaat? Rassentrennung, Arbeitszwang und totale Kontrolle in Deutsch-Südwestafrika” in Zimmerer and Zeller, eds., *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, 26-41; Robbie Aitken, *Exclusion and Inclusion: Gradations of Whiteness and Socio-economic Engineering in German Southwest Africa, 1884-1914* (New York: Lang, 2007); see also Birthe Kundrus, *Moderne Imperialisten: Das Kaiserreich im Spiegel seiner Kolonien* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003), 219-80; Helmut Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race across the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 167-210; Franz-Josef Schulte-Althoff, “Rassenmischung im kolonialen System: Zur deutschen Kolonialpolitik im letzten Jahrzehnt vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 105 (1995), 52-94; Frank Becker, ed., *Rassenmischehen - Mischlinge - Rassentrennung: Zur Politik der Rasse im deutschen Kolonialreich* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004).

¹¹² It is possible that Steiner’s distinction between “savage” peoples that are one the up-grade versus the down-grade of evolution, and that are thus either potentially available for civilizing or destined for extinction, refers to contrasting German perceptions of the Herero and the Nama (the latter were considered ‘Hottentots’), but this remains speculative. For further discussion of paternalist forms of racial thought compare Juhani Koponen, “Colonial Racism and Colonial Development: Colonial Policy and Forms of Racism in German East Africa” in Wilfried Wagner, ed., *Rassendiskriminierung, Kolonialpolitik und ethnisch-nationale Identität* (Münster: Lit, 1992), 89-107, and Michelle Moyd, “A Uniform of Whiteness: Racisms in the German Officer Corps,” in Jenny Macleod and Pierre Purseigle, eds., *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives in First World War Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 25-42.

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.¹¹³

Throughout his mature esoteric career, 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 physical plane and into the human body, which Steiner posited as the cause of white skin.¹¹⁴ Indeed these profound spiritual differences, marked by skin color, would eventually lead to “a violent battle of white humankind with colored humankind” before the next evolutionary epoch would be able to commence.¹¹⁵ Notwithstanding Steiner's earlier statements about the eventual disappearance of race as such, by the 1920s, according to anthroposophy, the future belonged to the white race. In 1920 Steiner proclaimed that “the new dawn of the white race” would come if the white race chose spirituality over materialism.¹¹⁶ In 1923 he declared: “The white race is the race of the future, the spiritually creative

¹¹³ Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, 52; the lecture, from March 3, 1923, carries the title “Farbe und Menschenrassen” (52-68).

¹¹⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1974), 35-37. “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)

¹¹⁵ Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges*, 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. And what precedes these battles between white and colored humankind will occupy world history until the completion of the great struggle between white and colored humanity.” A year after this 1915 lecture, anthroposophist Karl Heise assayed “den kommenden wirklichen Schwertkampf zwischen der weißen und gelben Rasse”: Heise, “Japan in der Weltkultur” *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* June 1916, 567-70, quote on 568.

¹¹⁶ Rudolf Steiner, *Wahrpruchworte* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1986), 293.

race.”¹¹⁷ On several other occasions Steiner endorsed Gobineau’s arguments about the superiority of the white race.¹¹⁸

These teachings are directly linked to 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 differing racial characters and differing cosmic missions. The five root races that 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 that are now lost under the sea.¹¹⁹ Thus the Aryan race, in theosophical and anthroposophical doctrine, arose on

¹¹⁷ Steiner, “Farbe und Menschenrassen,” *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, 67. In the same lecture Steiner claimed: “The whites are the ones who actually develop humanity in themselves.” (62)

¹¹⁸ Rudolf Steiner, *Das christliche Mysterium* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1998), 251-56 and 268, endorses both Gobineau’s and Richard Wagner’s ideas about blood and race. For a fine synopsis of Wagner’s views on blood, race, and Jews, see Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany*, 269-70; cf. also Tibor Kneif, “Wagner und der Antisemitismus” in Kneif, ed., *Richard Wagner: Die Kunst und die Revolution*, 114-30, and Otto Dov Kulka, “Richard Wagner und die Anfänge des modernen Antisemitismus” *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts* 1961, 281-300. 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 that underlie race; see *ibid.* 503-10. Steiner’s racial writings display occasional similarities to Gobineau’s work; see e.g. the discussion of poles of attraction and repulsion and the contradictory theory of ‘blood-mixing’ in colonial contexts in Steiner, *The Occult Significance of Blood*. Despite their similarly ambivalent attitudes toward intermarriage and ‘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.

¹¹⁹ For useful studies of the Atlantis and Lemuria myths see Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Lost Land of Lemuria: Fabulous Geographies, Catastrophic Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); L. Sprague de Camp, *Lost Continents: The Atlantis Theme in History, Science and Literature* (New York: Gnome Press, 1954); Burchard Brentjes, *Atlantis: Geschichte einer Utopie* (Cologne: DuMont, 1993); 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, “Atlantis and the Nations” *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992), 300-326. Alongside Blavatsky, the chief theosophical popularizer of the Atlantis and Lemuria myths before Steiner was

Atlantis and escaped the great flood that submerged the fabled island; under the guidance of higher spiritual beings, the Aryans continued to evolve racially and spiritually, while the leftover Atlantean and Lemurian races devolved. The Aryans went on to colonize the rest of the world.¹²⁰

The anthroposophical variant of the Aryan myth, integrally tied to the Atlantis myth, is a paradigmatic example of the conjoining of ancient and modern elements within Steiner's worldview.¹²¹ The Atlantis myth has existed at least since Plato, while

William Scott-Elliot; see Scott-Elliot, *The Story of Atlantis* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1896), and Scott-Elliot, *The Lost Lemuria* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904); in German see William Scott-Elliot and A. P. Sinnett, *Atlantis nach okkulter Quellen* (Leipzig: Grieben, 1903). The locus classicus for the linking of the Atlantis myth and the Aryan myth, and one of Blavatsky's and Scott-Elliot's chief sources, was the book that largely sparked the late nineteenth century Atlantis revival: Ignatius Donnelly, *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World* (New York: Harper, 1882); German edition: Ignatius Donnelly, *Atlantis, die vorsintflutliche Welt* (Leipzig: Schnurpfeil, 1895). For a further important instance of occult synthesis of the Atlantis and Aryan myths see the popular work of Edouard Schuré, who was initially an influence on Steiner and became one of Steiner's theosophical and anthroposophical followers: Schuré, *The Great Initiates*, 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. The book was originally published in French in 1889, and was 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). See also Schuré's account of "divine evolution": Schuré, *From Sphinx to Christ: An Occult History* (Blauvelt: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1970). The Atlantis myth was a popular theme among ariosophist authors as well; see e.g. Herbert Reichstein, *Gelöste Rätsel ältester Geschichte: Von Atlantis, Edda und der Bibel* (Berlin: Reichstein, 1934). James Webb, "Atlantis" in Cavendish, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Unexplained*, 45-48, notes Steiner's crucial role in linking the Atlantis myth and the Aryan myth, a link which went on to play a minor role within Nazi doctrine.

¹²⁰ For background on the Aryan myth see Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan 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); Stefan Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); 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; Colin Kidd, "The Aryan Moment: Racialising Religion in the Nineteenth Century" in Kidd, *The Forging of Races*, 168-202; Edwin Bryant, "Myths of Origin: Europe and the Aryan Homeland Quest" in Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13-45; John V. Day, "The Concept of the Aryan Race in Nineteenth-Century Scholarship" *Orpheus: Journal of Indo-European and Thracian Studies* 4 (1994), 13-48; Junginger, "From Buddha to Adolf Hitler"; and Thomas Trautmann, ed., *The Aryan Debate* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005). For a brief overview of the Aryan myth in Germany in Steiner's era see Woodruff Smith, *Politics and the Sciences of Culture in Germany 1840-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 61-65.

¹²¹ On the related myths of Atlantis and Aryans in esoteric contexts see among others Roberto Pinotti, "Continenti perduti ed esoterismo: prospettive tradizionali oltre il mito" in Pinotti, *I continenti perduti* (Milan: Mondadori, 1995), 306-56, and Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, 313-33. On the influence of these myths on various Nazi thinkers see Franz Wegener, *Das atlantidische Weltbild*:

the Aryan myth is a decidedly modern invention, emerging initially at the end of the eighteenth century through a conflation of philology and ethnology, although the myth's proponents typically project Aryan origins back to ancient Asia, or Thule, or Atlantis, and so forth. Particularly in his theosophical phase, Steiner endorsed a racial version of the Aryan myth, adopted from other occultists, and gave it a spiritual orientation.¹²² This trope was to become central to the racial theories of his anthroposophist followers in Germany, Italy, and elsewhere. Sometimes Steiner spoke of the “the great Aryan Root Race”;¹²³ 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.”¹²⁴ 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.”¹²⁵ On occasion Steiner also referred to “our Nordic race,”¹²⁶ and in one instance he posited a direct

Nationalsozialismus und Neue Rechte auf der Suche nach der versunkenen Atlantis (Gladbeck: Kulturförderverein Ruhrgebiet, 2001); Arn Strohmeier, *Von Hyperborea nach Auschwitz* (Cologne: PapyRossa, 2005); Joscelyn Godwin, *Arktos: The Polar Myth in Science, Symbolism, and Nazi Survival* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993); Hermand, *Old Dreams of a New Reich*, 191-98. For Steiner's own writings on the topic see above all *Cosmic Memory* as well as Rudolf Steiner, *The Submerged Continents of Atlantis and Lemuria* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1911). To the end of his life Steiner continued to treat these mythical lost continents as real; see e.g. his 1922 lectures on Lemuria in Rudolf Steiner, *Über frühe Erdzustände* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1957), or his 1924 lectures on Lemuria and Atlantis in Steiner, *Die Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen*.

¹²² On theosophical and occult contributions to the Aryan race concept in general see George Mosse's chapter “The Mystery of Race” in Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1978), 94-112; 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; 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 van der Veer, “Aryan Origins” in Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 134-57.

¹²³ Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, 201: “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.”

¹²⁴ Steiner, *The Mission of the Folk Souls*, 106.

¹²⁵ Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 46.

¹²⁶ Steiner, *Aus den Inhalten der esoterischen Stunden*, 219.

spiritual connection between intelligence and blonde hair and blue eyes, associating these features with “Nordic” peoples as well.¹²⁷ These claims were in turn embedded in a theosophically derived doctrine of racial and national karma.¹²⁸

Beyond the occult meaning of the Aryan myth for Steiner’s anthroposophy, teachings such as these highlight the overall structure of his theory of racial and ethnic evolution, one that is essential to understanding Steiner’s perspective on both nation and race. The basic motif is that of small, specially advanced racial groups progressing upward into the next evolutionary epoch, while the large mass of racially obsolete peoples declines. Steiner repeatedly invoked this pattern throughout his works on race, and applied it to both past and future.¹²⁹ The culmination of this process of racial-spiritual selection, which one of Steiner’s followers has aptly described as “cosmic

¹²⁷ Steiner’s claims about the link between skin color and intelligence came in a 1922 lecture in which he contrasted “Nordic” people with those who are “born in a warm, tropical climate”; Steiner explained: “In time, however, blondness will disappear because the human race is becoming weaker. In the end, only brown- and black-haired people will be able to survive if nothing is done to keep them from being bound to matter. The stronger the body’s forces, the weaker the soul’s. When fair people become extinct, the human race will face the danger of becoming dense if a spiritual science like Anthroposophy is not accepted. Anthroposophy does not have to take the body into consideration but can bring forth intelligence from spiritual investigation itself. You see, when we really study science and history, we must conclude that if people become increasingly strong, they will also become increasingly stupid. 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. In the case of fair people, less nourishment is driven into the eyes and hair; it remains instead in the brain and endows it with intelligence. Brown- and dark-haired people drive the substances into their eyes and hair that the fair people retain in their brains. They then become materialistic and observe only what can immediately be seen. Spiritual science must compensate for this; we must have a spiritual science to the same degree that humanity loses its intelligence along with its fair people.” Steiner, *Health and Illness*, 85-86. On the prominence of hair color and eye color within the German racial imagination in Steiner’s day, see chapter six in Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); on the German cult of blondness see Erich Biehahn, “Blondheit und Blondheitskult in der deutschen Literatur” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 46 (1964), 309-33.

¹²⁸ In Steiner’s words: “Through my karma I am joined to my nationality, because it is a part of karma.” Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 57; this is Steiner’s proposed anthroposophical alternative to blood-based conceptions of nationhood. See also Rudolf Steiner, *The Destinies of Individuals and Nations* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1986).

¹²⁹ See among others Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 45-46; 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.

eugenics,”¹³⁰ is the eventual divergence of humanity into a future “good race” and an “evil race” which will be physiologically distinct.¹³¹ Steiner further indicated that his own followers, and the German theosophical and anthroposophical movement that he led, 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.¹³² At the same time, Steiner’s racial and ethnic doctrine looked forward to the day when “racial characteristics” will give way to “national characteristics.”¹³³

Steiner’s theory of racial and ethnic evolution can be viewed as a somewhat eccentric spiritualized example of the broader “German tendency” described by historian of anthropology George Stocking, a model of “the progress of culture (or civilization)” that is “conceived in racial terms, with the Germanic peoples as the

¹³⁰ Sigismund von Gleich, *Die Menschwerdung des Weltenwortes* (Stuttgart: Waldorf-Verlag, 1939), 9; Gleich also uses the term “holy eugenics” (13) to describe Steiner’s “spiritual cosmology” and “new anthropology” (7). I examine Gleich’s writings on “the Aryan-Germanic race” in the following chapter.

¹³¹ See for example Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, 77; Steiner, *Die Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen*, 132-33; and Steiner, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 82-84, 90-92, 135, 139, 141-42, 145, etc.

¹³² See e.g. Steiner, *Grundelemente der Esoterik*, 251, and Steiner, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 133, 152, 186, 206. In crucial contexts Steiner portrayed the evolutionary path toward the ‘Universal Human’ as a move away from ethnic and racial particularity, explaining that “the deeper task of the anthroposophical movement” was to “enable a number of human beings to enter their next incarnation” in the proper manner in order to lead the way into the next epoch. Such anthroposophically prepared souls were to be dispersed across the world: “These people will then form the nucleus of the next period of civilization. Then these individuals who have been well prepared through the anthroposophical spiritual movement [...] will be spread over the earth. For the essential characteristic of the next period of civilization is that it will not be limited to particular localities, but will be spread over the whole earth. These individuals will be scattered over the earth, and thus everywhere on earth there will be a core group of people who will be crucial for the sixth epoch of civilization.” (Steiner, *The Universal Human*, 23) The tension between this precept and Steiner’s Germanocentric teachings runs throughout his work.

¹³³ Steiner, *The Mission of the Folk Souls*, 73. In Steiner’s esoteric theory, the categories of race and *Volk* (people or nation) were often closely intertwined; see for example Rudolf Steiner, *Die Tempellegende und die Goldene Legende* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1991), 251-57. In this he was consistent with other race theorists; Gobineau’s *Inequality of Human Races*, for instance, frequently mixes up “nation” and “race,” treating the two terms virtually as synonyms, and a similar conflation can often be found in Chamberlain’s work as well. This conceptual entanglement has a lengthy history, and may be central to the rise of racial thinking as such; for background see Nicholas Hudson, “From “Nation” to “Race”: The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (1996), 247-64, and Walkenhorst, *Nation - Volk – Rasse*, 102-12; cf. Geulen, *Wahlverwandte: Rassendiskurs und Nationalismus im späten 19. Jahrhundert*, 42-115, 154-271.

carriers of the purest or highest manifestations of the divine spirit.”¹³⁴

Anthroposophists strongly emphasized precisely this notion in the decade and a half following Steiner’s death. Indeed Steiner’s mature teachings on the esoteric meaning of race and nation can perhaps best be understood as a continuation of his youthful cultural nationalism, recast in a racial idiom. In simplified terms, its basic postulate could be expressed thus: Germanness can overcome ethnic and racial particularity and lead humanity toward its spiritual-evolutionary destiny. That this idea is itself an instance of ethnic particularism is something anthroposophists vigorously deny. From an anthroposophist perspective, Germanness, and for that matter “Germany” itself, is by no means restricted to the boundaries or the territory of the German state; it is above all a spiritual essence. Moreover, the logic of Steiner’s notion of a German cultural mission, with its Habsburg background, demanded that Slavs and Jews, for example, be at least potentially eligible for cultural acceptance into “full humanity” via assimilation to German concepts and identities as well as adoption of anthroposophy’s distinctive form of esoteric Christianity.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 25. Steiner’s specific contribution to this tendency involved his distinctive 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.

¹³⁵ For an example of Steiner’s discourse on “full humanity” see his remarks from 1920 in Rudolf Steiner, *Die Brücke zwischen der Weltgeistigkeit und dem Physischen des Menschen* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1980), 218; here Steiner explains that Judaism falls short of “full humanity” (“das volle Menschtum”), which can only come through Christ. In contrast to the Germans, representatives of universalism, Steiner frequently portrayed Jews and Jewishness as the prototype of national particularity and ethnic separatism and the chief antagonist of universal human qualities. This could be overcome, however, through abandoning Jewishness and wholly embracing Germanness. For a fuller explication see Staudenmaier, “Rudolf Steiner and the Jewish Question.” A sophisticated 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.

In this way, racial and ethnic designations sometimes take on an ambiguously flexible and fluid character within anthroposophical doctrine, without forsaking its underlying premise of German superiority. The very insistence on the centrality of Germanness, however, inevitably reveals the limits of this esoteric approach to the question of race and nation.¹³⁶ Not only are Germans 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 German spirit, destined to lead humanity out of the morass of materialism, toward the next universal and individualized stage of cosmic evolution, when nation and race will have faded from the spiritual stage.

On its own terms, anthroposophical race theory represents 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 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

¹³⁶ Anthroposophist Pietro Archiati provides a particularly succinct version of Steiner’s argument about the existing ethnic parameters of evolution toward the Universal Human. Posing the question “Wo gibt es rein Menschliches, jenseits von Rasse und Volk?” (“Where can the purely human be found, beyond race and nation?”), Archiati explains that 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 one specific place: “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*.” Archiati, *Die Überwindung des Rassismus durch die Geisteswissenschaft Rudolf Steiners*, 36. Archiati identifies Goethe and German Idealism and Steiner’s spiritual science as the paragons of universal humanness, and expounds upon the uniquely German attributes that made each an exemplar of spiritual perfection. According to Archiati, the creation of the “universal human” is the “special task of the German language, of German culture, indeed of the German national spirit” (37). Rejecting culturalist interpretations of this principle, he clarifies: “In order to be a European, one must be born in Europe.” (39) I address the anthroposophical conception of *Mitteleuropa* in the following chapter.

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, cultural and spiritual registers, aroused millenarian hopes in his followers and cast him in their eyes as Germany's savior, the one who would restore Germany 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 above all to be saved – Steiner's racial program presented an enigma to his contemporaries, compelling to some and repellent to others, for radically different reasons. Conceiving of the Germans as the vanguard of European culture, a crucial legacy of his Austrian origins, Steiner assumed the role of occult harbinger of the unique German spiritual mission to redeem the world.

Chapter 2

The Politics of the Unpolitical: German Anthroposophy in Theory and Practice, 1913-1933

With the formal separation from the Theosophical Society and the establishment of the Anthroposophical Society in late 1912 and early 1913, Rudolf Steiner and his followers in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and elsewhere embarked on an independent path toward an organized occultism that could meet the demands of the era.¹ In the course of the next two decades anthroposophists developed a distinctive version of esoteric thought and practice in which racial and national themes continued to play a substantial role. Throughout much of this period, anthroposophy continued to portray itself as quintessentially ‘unpolitical.’ From an anthroposophical point of view, 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 often 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 series of tacit political assumptions and inclinations, and converged with a broader tradition in German thought of denigrating the merely political as unworthy of the elevated tasks of *Geist* or spirit. From this perspective, politics, democracy and ‘civilization’ were lowly and un-German.² Anthroposophy provided an esoteric gloss on these ideas.

¹ On the notion of “organized occultism” see the section “The Emergence of Organized Occultism” in John Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith: Mesmerism, Spiritism, and Occultism in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 235-44.

² The classic instance of such arguments is Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin: Fischer, 1918), which rejects democracy, politics, progress and liberal values as aspects of superficial *Zivilisation* rather than *Kultur*. Mann soon changed his views and became a supporter of the Weimar Republic. A parallel shift does not appear in Steiner’s post-war works. For historical context on ostensibly ‘unpolitical’ invocations of the ‘German spirit’ see Wolf Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture in German History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) 9-26.

Rather than attempt a comprehensive overview of the early anthroposophical milieu, this chapter will explore several historically illuminating examples of anthroposophical theory as well as anthroposophy in action. The dual focus will be on anthroposophist relations with a variety of social movements and political currents, as well as on a range of anthroposophist publications about race and ethnicity. The chronological and ideological starting point is Steiner's response to the First World War. Although Steiner had established the center of the anthroposophical movement in the Swiss village of Dornach in 1913, he spent as much time in Germany and Austria during World War One as in neutral Switzerland.³ Particularly during the early years of the conflict, Steiner 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 evil machinations of their enemies, while simultaneously offering a spiritual and supernatural interpretation of the war's causes.⁴

In a lecture to German anthroposophists on September 30, 1914, Steiner described the war as a spiritual mentor, a "teacher" and "master" that has taught people to fight egoism and materialism and has engendered "love for humanity." He declared that the war was cosmically necessary, that it is "founded in the karma of the nations" (*im Karma der Völker begründet*) and "must happen for the salvation of humankind."⁵ In a February 1915 lecture, Steiner acknowledged that the war had

³ Details on Steiner's activities during the war can be found in Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Chronik*, including week-by-week accounts of his travels, lectures, and so forth; according to the information provided by Lindenberg, Steiner spent roughly half of the war in Germany.

⁴ For a revealing anthology of Steiner's war-related texts see Roman Boos, ed., *Rudolf Steiner während des Weltkrieges* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1933). Important context is available in 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, and Tollenare, *The Politics of Divine Wisdom*, 156-60. See also "Die Okkultisten und der Krieg" *Die Übersinnliche Welt* October 1915, 314-16.

⁵ Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges*, 24-25.

caused “enormous rivers of blood to flow,” but explained that these rivers of blood “must flow today because of the eternal necessities of earthly evolution.” He depicted the war as the earthly manifestation of necessary processes playing out in “the concrete spiritual world,” among “the beings of the spirit worlds”; it is “a world of demons and spirits which works through humankind when nations battle one another.” By understanding the war’s spiritual dimension, the conflict appeared as preparation for “the future evolution of humanity.”⁶

Anthroposophists believed that the World War would bring Germany the stature it deserved, world spiritual predominance. 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.”⁷ In 1916 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.⁸ Steiner maintained a friendly relationship with Helmuth von Moltke the younger, chief of the German general staff, whose wife was an active anthroposophist.⁹ This association became a liability for Steiner after the

⁶ Ibid., 32-33, 53. For Steiner, the war was not just a military conflict but a battle of national spirits, a cosmic confrontation between “Germandom” and the spiritually immature East as well as the spiritually obsolete West; it would be an evolutionary tragedy if the German element were to be defeated by the Romanic element or the Slavic element. (42-43) “We know as anthroposophists: Europe’s I resides in the German spirit. That is an objective occult fact.” (19)

⁷ See the declaration of “Absichten und Ziele” on the first page of the premier issue of the anthroposophist journal *Das Reich*, April 1916; its opening sentence describes the war as a “Zeitenwende, die Deutschland und dem germanischen Volkstum die Führerschaft im Gesamtbereiche der menschlichen Geisteskultur bringen wird.” The first article, immediately following this declaration, is by Steiner. See also Karl Heise, “Der Krieg und seine Folgen” *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* November 1914, 213-16, and Heise, “Kriegs-Visionen” *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus*, August 1917, 72-76.

⁸ See Rudolf Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus?* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1986), 232-33; cf. Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Biographie*, 574, and Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1274-75. 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.

⁹ The most thorough study of Steiner’s relationship to Moltke is Helmut Zander, “Der Generalstabschef Helmuth von Moltke d.J. und das theosophische Milieu um Rudolf Steiner” *Militär-geschichtliche Zeitschrift* 62 (2003), 423-58. For context see Annika Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 51-54, 261-64. After Moltke’s death in 1916, Steiner claimed to be in communication with his departed spirit and channeled various

war, when some blamed his supposed ‘occult influence’ over Moltke for the German loss at the battle of the Marne.¹⁰ Similar accusations continued to animate several varieties of right-wing and nationalist hostility toward anthroposophy in the years to come.

Anthroposophist responses to such hostility in the interwar era reveal a complex pattern of affinity and confrontation between Steiner’s esoteric vision and the politics of the right, particularly the multifaceted cultural and political stream known as the *völkisch* movement. During the same period, anthroposophy shifted emphasis from cultivating and propagating an occult worldview to implementing practical projects. The First World War did not conclude with the German victory its advocates expected, and the far-reaching social changes that swept Germany and Austria in the wake of the lost war spurred a re-assessment of anthroposophical priorities. 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

pronouncements of Moltke’s from the other world. After the final German defeat, for example, Steiner channeled Moltke blaming the war on “Ahrimanic spirits” in the West and “oriental demons” in the East; see Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Biographie*, 586. For Steiner’s full-scale defense of Moltke see e.g. his May 1919 essay “Die ‘Schuld’ am Kriege” in Rudolf Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus und zur Zeitlage* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1961), 376-87.

¹⁰ Steiner did have a private meeting with Moltke in late August 1914, but there is no evidence that Steiner exercised any influence over Moltke’s military decisions. On Moltke’s general esoteric and spiritualist leanings, as well as his specifically anthroposophist inclinations, see Isabel Hull, *The entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1888-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 233, 240-41. Hull, 366, notes that the extensive editing of Moltke’s memoirs by Steiner and Eliza Moltke casts doubt on the reliability of the memoirs, particularly regarding Moltke’s continued personal interest in and pursuit of esoteric topics after his 1906 appointment to head the General Staff. The original anthroposophist publication of the memoirs is Helmuth von Moltke, *Erinnerungen – Briefe – Dokumente* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1922). For an early anthroposophist statement on the controversy see Sigismund von Gleich, *Wahrheit gegen Unwahrheit über Rudolf Steiner* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1921).

spirit had been failed by an inadequate array of social institutions which needed to be revitalized through spiritual and national regeneration.¹¹

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.¹² In some versions, the anthroposophist emphasis on German innocence was coupled with conspiracy theories about longstanding Western plans to destroy and dismantle the German and Austrian empires. Steiner himself had declared already in 1914 that "this war is a conspiracy against German spiritual life."¹³ Some anthroposophists, with Steiner's active support,

¹¹ For a much more detailed analysis that converges in many respects with my own, see Helmut Zander's examination of Steiner's reaction to World War One in Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1250-86. General context is available in Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), and Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Die Kultur der Niederlage* (Berlin: Fest, 2001), 227-343.

¹² See Rudolf Steiner, *Gedanken während der Zeit des Krieges* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1915) for an early instance of the standard anthroposophist stance on the war. Steiner emphatically re-affirmed this wartime text in 1921; see Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung*, 228-29. The 1915 work is listed as one of the "basic works of Rudolf Steiner" in Karl Heyer, *Wie man gegen Rudolf Steiner kämpft* (Stuttgart: Ernst Surkamp, 1932). Further wartime lectures portraying Germany and Austria as innocent victims of the "West" and the "East" can be found in Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, and Steiner, *Aus schicksaltragender Zeit*; for his presentation of classical and contemporary German and Austrian thinkers in order to rally the German spirit during the war, see Rudolf Steiner, *Vom Menschenrätsel* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1916). 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). An overview of this crowded textual field is available in Thomas Schneider, ed., *Die Autoren und Bücher der deutschsprachigen Literatur zum Ersten Weltkrieg 1914-1939* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2008).

¹³ Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges*, 27; cf. 155-57 and 178-80. For further instances of Steiner's conspiracist interpretation of the war see Rudolf Steiner, *Secret Brotherhoods and the Mystery of the Human Double* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2004) and Steiner, *The Karma of Untruthfulness: Secret Societies, the Media, and Preparations for the Great War* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2005). According to Steiner, 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 1890's 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." (Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 22) 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." Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, 321. For context see Matthew Stibbe, *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

included Freemasons and Jews within this ostensible anti-German conspiracy.¹⁴ The principal anthroposophist argument, however, was that the German people and the German spirit bore no responsibility for the war.¹⁵ While the claim that Germany carried no war guilt has been controverted by subsequent historiography, it was common enough in Germany at the time, not least as a reaction against the Versailles treaty.¹⁶ Steiner's polemics against the treaty, as well as his invective against Woodrow Wilson, the League of Nations, the English, French, Russians, and Americans, represent an esoteric version of resentments that were widespread among nationalist oriented circles in Germany and Austria.¹⁷

¹⁴ Three examples, Karl Heise, Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz, and Wilhelm von Heydebrand, will be examined below.

¹⁵ Anthroposophists have continued to insist that Germany bore no responsibility for the First World War; for examples see Jürgen von Grone, "Zum Kriegsausbruch 1914" *Die Drei* January 1964, 1-10; Jürgen von Grone, "Rudolf Steiners Handeln im Dienste Mitteleuropas" *Die Drei* April 1969, 80-90; Thomas Meyer, ed., *Helmuth von Moltke, 1848 - 1916: Dokumente zu seinem Leben und Wirken* (Basel: Perseus, 1993); 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); 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).

¹⁶ See Ulrich Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage: Politische Öffentlichkeit und Kriegsschuldfrage in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983). For a variety of overviews of current scholarship on the origins of the war see Sönke Neitzel, *Kriegsausbruch: Deutschlands Weg in die Katastrophe 1900-1914* (Zürich: Pendo, 2002); Annika Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War: Controversies and Consensus* (New York: Longman, 2002); Richard Hamilton and Holger Herwig, eds., *The Origins of World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Mark Hewitson, *Germany and the Causes of the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 2004); Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Volker Berghahn, *Der Erste Weltkrieg* (Munich: Beck, 2006); Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson, eds., *An Improbable War? The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007); Stig Förster, "Im Reich des Absurden: Die Ursachen des Ersten Weltkrieges" in Bernd Wegner, ed., *Wie Kriege entstehen: Zum historischen Hintergrund von Staatenkonflikten* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000), 211-52; Kevin Cramer, "A World of Enemies: New Perspectives on German Military Culture and the Origins of the First World War" *Central European History* 39 (2006), 270-98; Annika Mombauer, "The First World War: Inevitable, Avoidable, Improbable or Desirable? Recent Interpretations on War Guilt and the War's Origins" *German History* 25 (2007), 78-95.

¹⁷ On the responses of German intellectuals to the war see Wolfgang Mommsen, "Die deutschen kulturellen Eliten im Ersten Weltkrieg" in Wolfgang Mommsen, ed., *Kultur und Krieg: Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), 1-15; Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg, "Wie gibt man dem Sinnlosen einen Sinn? Zum Gebrauch der Begriffe

Steiner's stance toward the war and its aftermath was based in large measure on his vision of *Mitteleuropa* or central Europe, a term which in anthroposophist usage generally referred to those lands in which German cultural and spiritual life was seen as rightfully predominant, with the German-speaking territories of Austria, Switzerland and Germany at their core.¹⁸ 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, according to the anthroposophist viewpoint, was "opposed to the divinely ordered course of

'deutsche Kultur' und 'Militarismus' im Herbst 1914" in *ibid.* 77-96; Suzanne Marchand, "Kultur and the World War" in Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 228-62; Helmut Fries, *Die große Katharsis: Der Erste Weltkrieg in der Sicht deutscher Dichter und Gelehrter* (Konstanz: Verlag am Hockgraben, 1995); Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung: Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Fest, 2000); Steffen Bruendel, *Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat: Die "Ideen von 1914" und die Neuordnung Deutschlands im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2003). On German tendencies to view the war in spiritual and cultural terms see Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 90-94. For context see Rüdiger vom Bruch, *Weltpolitik als Kulturmission: Auswärtige Kulturpolitik und Bildungsbürgertum in Deutschland am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1982).

¹⁸ Steiner's statements can be found in Rudolf Steiner, *Aus dem mitteleuropäischen Geistesleben* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1962), a series of public lectures in Berlin in 1915 and 1916; Rudolf Steiner, *Mitteleuropa zwischen Ost und West* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1982); Rudolf Steiner, *Nordische und mitteleuropäische Geistimpulse* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1982); Rudolf Steiner, *Die Forderungen der Gegenwart an Mitteleuropa* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1951); Rudolf Steiner, *Wesen und Bedeutung Mitteleuropas und die europäischen Volksgeister* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1980). Further anthroposophist treatments include Hans Helling, "Soll Deutschland sich amerikanisieren lassen?" *Der Pfad* September 1927, 20; Alfred Heidenreich, "Die englischen Weltkirchenpläne und die religiöse Weltaufgabe des deutschen Geistes" *Die Christengemeinschaft* May 1932, 41-50; Wilhelm von Heydebrand, "Osten, Westen, und die Dreigliederung" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 34 (1920); Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Deutschlands Erneuerung" *Christentum und Gegenwart* January 1920, 15-16; Jürgen von Grone, "Die grossen Fragen der Gegenwart" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* August 1931, 12-15; Klaus Petersen, *Rudolf Steiner und der mitteleuropäische Kulturauftrag* (Berlin: Dionysos-Verlag, 1961); Hans Colman, ed., *Mitteleuropa im Spannungsfeld der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1986); Renate Riemeck, *Mitteleuropa: Bilanz eines Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1965). Riemeck's book claims that World War I was planned by the Western powers decades ahead of time, beginning in the 1870s, and holds the French, the Russians, the Pope and the Rothschilds responsible for the war, but places chief blame on a group of English financiers who conspired via various Masonic lodges in order to attack Germany. Her account focuses on "secret societies" and malevolent occult forces, blames "dark powers" for the "destruction of Mitteleuropa" and the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire (83), and holds the American entry into World War One responsible for "the catastrophe of Mitteleuropa" (116).

evolution.”¹⁹ Steiner’s teachings were part of a broader German discourse of *Mitteleuropa* built around the assumption or aim of German hegemony on much of the continent, whether cast in political, economic, or cultural terms.²⁰ 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*), real spiritual entities that oversee the process of ethnic evolution:

Every human being has his particular virtues and vices but in matters connected with the etheric body a certain similarity prevails. This can be seen in the characteristics that have to do with race, with nationality. Because of this we see that each individual does not have an Archangel to himself in respect of his etheric body but that it is whole nationalities and races which are guided by higher and lower Spirits of Fire. The peoples and races of our earth are indeed guided by the spirits called Archangels or Spirits of Fire. Here our view expands to something that to many people is a complete abstraction, but which is a reality to those who are able to see into the spiritual world. If anyone today speaks of

¹⁹ Steiner, *From Symptom to Reality in Modern History*, 12. Thus “Wilsonianism,” in Steiner’s view, was “resisting the true progress of humanity, and the phrase ‘freedom of nations’,” according to Steiner, “goes against the stream of evolution.” Steiner, *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness*, 187. Statements such as these indicate the limits of anthroposophist conceptions of multiethnic tolerance. For a concrete instance see Hans Erhard Lauer, “Lebensempfindungen in Wien und Österreich” *Anthroposophie* July 27, 1922, 2-3, which complains that “Vienna is being overrun by Hungarians, Czechs, Poles, Slovaks, and Italians.”

²⁰ For background see Henry Meyer, *Mitteleuropa in German thought and action 1815-1945* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1955); Jörg Brechtefeld, *Mitteleuropa and German Politics: 1848 to the Present* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996); Lonnie Johnson, *Central Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 165-70; Jürgen Elvert, *Mitteleuropa! Deutsche Pläne zur europäischen Neuordnung (1918 - 1945)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999); Richard Plaschka, ed., *Mitteleuropa-Konzeptionen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1995); 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; 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. On the connotations of the *Mitteleuropa* idea in the context of World War One see Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, 86-87; David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 362-63; Fritz Fischer, *Weltmacht oder Niedergang: Deutschland im ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1965), 14-19, 45-49, 70-73; and Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918* vol. II, 809-12, 819-20.

the Folk-Soul or the Folk-Spirit this is considered an abstraction. It is not so to the occult observer. He sees a whole people as it were embedded together in a spiritual substance, and this spiritual substance is the body of a Spirit 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.²¹

The task of the national soul is to help guide each people toward its true spiritual mission.²² 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 Entente.

Steiner's movement thus 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 German people within Europe and its mission in the world. In some cases,

²¹ Steiner, *Universe, Earth and Man*, 48-49.

²² See above all Steiner, *The Mission of the Individual Folk Souls in Relation to Teutonic Mythology*, as well as the related series of wartime lectures in Steiner, *The Destinies of Individuals and of Nations*. The latter work is a translation of Steiner, *Menschenschicksale und Völkerschicksale* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1960), originally published as Steiner, *Zeitbetrachtungen* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1919). Cf. also Rudolf Steiner, *Die Seelen der Völker geisteswissenschaftlich betrachtet* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1929), and Steiner's 1920 lecture "Die Völker der Erde im Lichte der Geisteswissenschaft" *Die Drei: Monatschrift für Anthroposophie* December 1925, 644-63. Subsequent anthroposophist treatments include Ernst Boldt, "The German National Soul" in Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner*, 30-36; Karl Heyer, "Vom Wesen der Völker und ihren Kulturmissionen: Der deutsche Geist" in Heyer, *Menschheitsfragen der Gegenwart im Lichte anthroposophischer Welterkenntnis* (Basel: Geering, 1927), 71-95; Eugen Kolisko, "Ein Zeugnis der deutschen Volksseele für die Wirksamkeit des Geistes in der Weltgeschichte" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* August 1933, 2-5; Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Christusgeist und Volksseele" *Die Christengemeinschaft* March 1934, 358-64; 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); Wilken, *Geistesgeschichtliche Entwicklungslinien des deutschen Schicksals*; Max Stibbe, "Die Physiognomie Europas" *Europas Aufgabe im gegenwärtigen Weltgeschehen* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1953), 11-27; *Die Seelen der Völker: Eine Schriftenreihe zum Verständnis der Völker und Rassen* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1954); Maria Dedo-Brie, "Das Wesen des Volksgeistes bei Rudolf Steiner, Hegel und Spengler" *Die Drei* December 1956, 281-90; 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).

anthroposophist views on these topics were expressed in racial or ethnic terms.²³ The thematic overlap between anthroposophy and the *völkisch* milieu gave rise at times to a situation of competition and rivalry, both organizational and ideological. 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.²⁴ In the contest for leadership in the midst of this simultaneously disaffected and chiliastic mood, anthroposophy occasionally became a target of disgruntled attacks by Germany's other would-be saviors.²⁵

This dynamic accelerated with the establishment of anthroposophy's practical and public institutions: the Waldorf school movement, founded in 1919; anthroposophical medicine, beginning in 1920; biodynamic agriculture, initiated in

²³ In addition to the excerpts provided in the previous chapter, examples include Karl Heyer's racially tinged reminiscence of the Rhineland occupation: Heyer, "Erinnerung an die Besetzung der Rheinlande" *Anthroposophie* July 13, 1930, 218-19; Heyer describes his "widrigen Gefühle beim Anblick der farbigen Truppen, der Neger, Anamiten, Marokkaner, usw. usw." Similar views on the 'black disgrace' are expressed even more strongly in Richard Karutz, "Über Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 11, 1931, 13-14.

²⁴ Steiner's followers depicted him in messianic terms as a "Menschheitsführer" with a "weltgeschichtliche Aufgabe" and portrayed anthroposophy as "ein geistiges Erlösungswerk, das von Mitteleuropa aus die ganze Menschheit ergreifen will": Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Meine Lebensbegegnung mit Rudolf Steiner* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1928), 136. Rittelmeyer describes Steiner's efforts after the "Zusammenbruch" of 1918: "Übermenschlich kämpfte er damals um ein Doppeltes: die Rettung der deutschen Arbeiterschaft vor dem drohenden Bolschewismus und die Rettung des deutschen Volkes vor dem Versailler Diktat." (116) For an anthroposophist effort to set these ideas in context see Hans Erhard Lauer, *Rudolf Steiners Anthroposophie im Weltanschauungskampfe der Gegenwart* (Basel: Geering, 1927); for a historical analysis see Helmut Zander, "Rudolf Steiner und die frühe Theosophie in Deutschland. Vom esoterischen Zirkel zum Weltanschauungskonzern – (k)eine Organisationsgeschichte anthroposophischer Intellektualität" in Richard Faber and Christine Holste, eds., *Kreise – Gruppen – Bünde: Zur Soziologie moderner Intellektuellenassoziation* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 373-84.

²⁵ These attacks have sometimes metastasized, in retrospective anthroposophist accounts, into a many-headed *völkisch* campaign against Steiner and his movement. For a recent addition to this exaggerated version of events see Lorenzo Ravagli, *Unter Hammer und Hakenkreuz: Der völkisch-nationalsozialistische Kampf gegen die Anthroposophie* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 2004). Ravagli's book is the most substantial anthroposophical narrative of the rivalries and animosities between *völkisch* adherents and anthroposophists; while its analysis is of little historical value, the book does contain useful information about a variety of nationalist and right-wing opponents of anthroposophy during the Weimar period. For a contemporary defense of Steiner see Horst Münzer, "Geisteswissenschaft, Theosophie und Okkultismus" *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* April 1917, 446-52.

1924; and the openly religious arm of the anthroposophist movement, the Christian Community, starting in 1922. The intellectual context for this rapid ferment of organized occultism under anthroposophist auspices was the theory of ‘social threefolding’ that Steiner began developing in 1917.²⁶ The full name that Steiner gave to this doctrine was “Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus” or the three-fold structuring of the social organism, a formulation that highlights the organicist conception of society underlying the theory.²⁷ Steiner held that society consists of three autonomous branches, the economic sphere, the political sphere, and the spiritual

²⁶ The primary text is Rudolf Steiner, *Die Kernpunkte der sozialen Frage in den Lebensnotwendigkeiten der Gegenwart und Zukunft* (Stuttgart: Greiner und Pfeiffer, 1919). Early authorized English translations include Rudolph Steiner, *The Threefold State: The True Aspect of the Social Question* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1920); Rudolph Steiner, *The Triorganic Social Organism: An Exposition of the Embryonal Points of the Social Question in the Life-Necessities of the Present and Future* (Detroit: The Goetheanum Press of America, 1920); and Rudolf Steiner, *The Three-fold Commonwealth* (London: The Threefold Commonwealth Publishing Association, 1922). See also Rudolf Steiner, *In Ausführung der Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag Verlag, 1920); Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, available in abridged translation as Rudolf Steiner, *The Renewal of the Social Organism* (Spring Valley: Anthroposophic Press, 1985); and Karl Heyer, “Esoterische Grundlagen und Aspekte der sozialen Dreigliederung” in Heyer, *Wer ist der deutsche Volksgeist?*. An early overview in English is available in Guenther Wachsmuth, *From the Basic Ideas of Rudolf Steiner on the Threefold Social Order* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1931).

²⁷ For context see Ralph Bowen, *German Theories of the Corporative State* (New York: Whittlesey, 1947), particularly 13-19 on the notion of society as an organism; Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*, 249-52; Paul Weindling, *Darwinism and Social Darwinism in Imperial Germany: The Contribution of the Cell Biologist Oscar Hertwig (1849-1922)* (Stuttgart: Fischer, 1991), 288-303; Anne Harrington, *Reenchanting Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 56-62; Francis Coker, *Organismic Theories of the State: Nineteenth Century Interpretations of the State as Organism or as Person* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1910); Carl Landauer, *Corporate State Ideologies: Historical Roots and Philosophical Origins* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1983); Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1322-31; Breuer, *Die Völkischen in Deutschland*, 14-16; Avraham Barkai, *Das Wirtschaftssystem des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1988), 68-102; Herman Lebovics, *Social Conservatism and the Middle Classes in Germany, 1914-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 109-38; Gerhard Dohrn - van Rossum, *Politischer Körper, Organismus, Organisation: Zur Geschichte natürlicher Metaphorik und Begrifflichkeit in der politischen Sprache* (dissertation, Universität Bielefeld, Fakultät für Geschichtswissenschaften, 1977). Steiner sometimes posited the state as the expression of the organism of the *Volk*: “Every person must find the place where his work may be articulated in the most fruitful way into his people’s organism. It must not be left to chance to determine whether he shall find this place. The state constitution has no other goal than to ensure that everyone shall find his appropriate place. The state is the form in which the organism of a people expresses itself.” Rudolf Steiner, *Goethe the Scientist* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1950), 164. For Steiner’s 1917 reflections on contemporary conceptions of the state as an organism see Steiner, *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness*, 120-35.

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 and functions more commonly associated with the political sphere.²⁸

One crucial aspect of the ‘threefold social order’ was that neither the economic realm nor the cultural realm was to be organized democratically; democratic forms and procedures were permissible only in the somewhat attenuated political realm.²⁹

Even in the political sphere, however, Steiner’s attitude toward democracy was often firmly negative. In October 1917, for instance, he ridiculed “democratic institutions”

²⁸ A revealing first-hand précis of Steiner’s social threefolding doctrines is available from his admirer Rom Landau: “Man was for Steiner a ‘threefold’ being, composed of will-power, emotions and mind. The life of a nation was for him likewise a Threefold Commonwealth, created by economical, political, and intellectual and artistic activities. Economics include the production, distribution and consumption of commodities and the welfare of the people. Politics are the expression of the native psychology of a people, and in Steiner’s programme included military as well as political matters. The intellectual life included the sciences, education, letters and social services. Economics must be capable of adapting themselves from day to day to the existing conditions; they must be run by experts and must not be hindered by political necessities. Political life and administration are by the very nature of a given psychology of a people conservative, and Steiner therefore wanted to allow them to preserve their nature. This could only be achieved if they were run by men with the greatest experience of life, by the ‘elders’ of the nation. While economics are opportunistic and politics conservative, the intellectual current tends toward individualism. It should be directed by the greatest men, the most outstanding personalities.” (Landau, *God is my Adventure*, 76) For a detailed analysis and critique of ‘social threefolding’ see Ilas Körner-Wellershaus, *Sozialer Heilsweg Anthroposophie: Eine Studie zur Geschichte der sozialen Dreigliederung Rudolf Steiners unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der anthroposophischen Geisteswissenschaft* (Alfter: VDG, 1993).

²⁹ See among others Rudolf Steiner, *Vom Einheitsstaat zum dreigliedrigen sozialen Organismus* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1983), and Rudolf Steiner, *Heilfaktoren für den sozialen Organismus* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1969). Political ambitions have sometimes been attributed to Steiner himself; for example, Linse, *Barfüssige Propheten*, 84, surmises that Steiner’s goal was to be named minister of culture of Württemberg and that his transient focus on proletarian audiences in the Stuttgart area in 1919 aimed to pressure the Social Democratic provincial premier to give him a government post; cf. *Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe 27* (1969), 6-7. For an anthroposophist viewpoint on the question of Steiner’s political aims at this time see Albert Schmelzer, *Die Dreigliederungsbewegung 1919* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1991), 119-20, 128-30, 159, 183; Schmelzer notes that Steiner briefly considered founding a political party. A contemporary account is available in Roman Boos, “Rudolf Steiner und die Politik” in Friedrich Rittelmeyer, ed., *Vom Lebenswerk Rudolf Steiners: Eine Hoffnung neuer Kultur* (Munich: Kaiser, 1921), 209-40. For Steiner’s own perspective see his January 1920 lecture to members of the Anthroposophical Society, “Ist die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus Politik? – geisteswissenschaftlich beantwortet” in Steiner, *Geistige und soziale Wandlungen in der Menschheitsentwicklung* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1966), 120-34.

as mere tools of the “powers of darkness” who are always “pulling the strings” from behind the scenes.³⁰ This skepticism toward democracy was accompanied by a variety of authoritarian assumptions deriving in part from anthroposophy’s self-conception as an esoteric worldview.³¹ In a threefold society, Steiner held, 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 would be unfettered by political requirements or economic demands.

The doctrines of ‘social threefolding’ inspired a short-lived social movement, one of the few organized anthroposophist forays into politics, between 1919 and the onset of hyperinflation in 1922.³² But the path from theory to practice took several

³⁰ Steiner, *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness*, 223. Landau, *God is my Adventure*, 76, confirms that Steiner’s social threefolding program was conceived as an alternative to democracy: “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.” For context cf. 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. Steiner’s skepticism toward liberal democracy as a Western imposition on German traditions pre-dated his esoteric turn; in 1889 he wrote: “Es ist einfach Thorheit, wenn man glaubt, alle Staaten können nach der in Frankreich und England üblichen liberalen Schablone regiert werden. Der Staatslenker hat die tiefen Eigentümlichkeiten seines Volkes zu erforschen und den Tendenzen, die in ihm schlummern, durch die Verfassung die ihnen entsprechende Richtung zu geben. Es kann vorkommen, daß die Mehrheit des Volkes in Bahnen einlenken will, die gegen seine eigene Natur gehen, dann hat sich der Staatsmann von der letztern und nicht von den zufälligen Forderungen der Mehrheit leiten zu lassen; er hat die Volkheit gegen das Volk in diesem Falle zu vertreten.” Steiner, *Goethes Werke: Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, vol II, li-lii.

³¹ Helmut Zander’s thorough examination of ‘social threefolding’ underscores these aspects of the theory while noting significant countervailing tendencies as well; see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1286-1356. For a nuanced discussion of the anti-democratic nature of Steiner’s conception of politics see in particular 1314-21 and 1695-96. Steiner’s followers shared his dim view of democratic and liberal political systems, sometimes casting them as forms of materialism just as dangerous as Marxism. An October 1920 pamphlet from the *Bund für anthroposophische Hochschularbeit* condemned “abstract worldviews” such as “Marxism, formal democracy, and abstract liberalism,” declaring them to be “lebensfeindlich” and “volksfremd” (BA R8088/414). The pamphlet calls for a “Führer” to lead Germany out of “materialism” and says that such a leader “can today only be found in Rudolf Steiner.”

³² For anthroposophist accounts see Schmelzer, *Die Dreigliederungsbewegung 1919*; Hans Kühn, *Dreigliederungs-Zeit: Rudolf Steiners Kampf für die Gesellschaftsordnung der Zukunft* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1978), Joachim Luttermann, *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus: Grundlinien der Rechts- und Soziallehre Rudolf Steiners* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1990); Hella

noteworthy turns. The rise and fall of the threefolding movement traces the arc of anthroposophy's early flirtation with political engagement and reveals significant features of the social beliefs, 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. During this period of hegemony on the Eastern front, Steiner addressed his initial threefolding proposals to a range of German and Austrian aristocrats and political and military leaders.³³ Steiner's July 1917 memoranda to the Austrian Kaiser, the first formulation of the threefolding theory, took these military gains for granted and explicitly raised the possibility of augmenting the territory of the Habsburg empire.³⁴ Anthroposophist efforts to persuade the Austrian Kaiser failed,

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. These works provide significantly different perspectives on social threefolding from the ones explored here, and should be consulted for comparative and contextual purposes.

³³ 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. For a retrospective anthroposophist account see Johannes Tautz, "Rudolf Steiner im Epochenjahr 1917" *Die Drei* October 1967, 285-97. According to anthroposophical sources, the leader of the German delegation to the Brest-Litovsk treaty negotiations, Richard von Kühlmann, took a copy of Steiner's 'social threefolding' memoranda to Brest-Litovsk at the beginning of the negotiations in December 1917: see Wehr, *Rudolf Steiner*, 259. In light of later attacks on anthroposophy from the right, as well as Steiner's own attacks on "Wilsonism," it is important to recall that the original version of 'social threefolding' developed out of this particular historical situation, in which Germany and their Austrian allies had not only conquered vast portions of the East, but also seemed poised to win the war overall; American troops had yet to arrive on the continent, and Entente forces had suffered a series of significant defeats. The eastern territories were, moreover, the primary bone of contention between advocates of Wilsonian self-determination and Steiner's threefolding alternative. Shattered anthroposophist hopes of a new European order under German auspices go a long way toward accounting for the bitter tone of Steiner's remarks regarding Wilson, and 'Western' democracy in general, once Germany had lost the war. For context see Vejas Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East, 1800 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³⁴ The brother of Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz, a leading anthroposophist and close personal acquaintance of Steiner, was Count Arthur Polzer-Hoditz, a highly influential adviser to Kaiser Karl of Austria. Arthur Polzer-Hoditz discussed Steiner's threefolding ideas with the Kaiser and circulated Steiner's memoranda among senior officials in the Austrian government. Although these efforts yielded little practical success, the Kaiser did award Steiner the civilian version of the War Cross in summer 1917 (see Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Chronik*, 386). The 1917 memoranda 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

and in January 1918 Steiner turned his hopes toward Prince Maximilian of Baden, who nine months later became the last Chancellor of Imperial Germany.³⁵ In a personal meeting with Prince Max, Steiner outlined his ‘threefolding’ ideas and presented them as anchored in his teachings on *Volkseelen*, giving the Prince a copy of his book on ‘national souls’.³⁶ These efforts to convince German leaders of the wisdom of social threefolding also failed.

as the hegemony of the “Anglo-American race.” For a perceptive analysis see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1275-84. According to Steiner’s close associate 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 Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 311-316. By early 1918, Steiner cast ‘social threefolding’ as the path to salvation from both “Anglo-Americanism” and Bolshevism; by early 1920, he declared in stark terms that the choice was between Bolshevism and his own doctrines: “Either Bolshevism over the entire world or threefolding!” (Steiner, *Geistige und soziale Wandlungen in der Menschheitsentwicklung*, 133) For Steiner’s denunciation of “Anglo-American capital” see e.g. Rudolf Steiner, *Betriebsräte und Sozialisierung* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1989), 13.

³⁵ Max von Baden was a leading proponent of German “ethical imperialism” as a counter to Western democracy, and submitted a memorandum on the topic to the German Kaiser in late March 1918, a few weeks after the Brest-Litovsk treaty. See “Der ethische Imperialismus” in Prinz Max von Baden, *Erinnerungen und Dokumente* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1928), 249-59. The opening sentence reads: “Unsere militärische Lage ist so glänzend wie noch nie.” Beginning from this position of military superiority, Prince Max argues for highlighting “das ethische Fundament des deutschen Imperialismus” (253). “Darum müssen wir allgemeine Menschheitsziele in unseren nationalen Willen aufnehmen.” (254) “Will der deutsche Imperialismus dem Ansturm der Demokratie mit ihrem Anspruch auf Weltverbesserung standhalten, so muß er sich ethisch fundamentieren. Mit dem reinen Machtanspruch kann die Demokratie mühelos fertig werden. Der Krieg hat uns die Gelegenheit gegeben, unser Recht auf Macht zu etablieren.” (256) He concludes by calling for Germany to take over “die moralische Führerrolle der Welt” (257), casting this as Germany’s “nationale Sendung” (259). For critical context on Max von Baden’s political views see Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich*, 216-17. For a thoroughly positive anthroposophist portrait of Max von Baden see Schmelzer, *Die Dreigliederungsbewegung 1919*, 59-64. Another advocate of “ethical imperialism” and possible point of comparison for Steiner’s perspective is colonial publicist Paul Rohrbach, who was deeply committed to Germany’s “cultural mission,” albeit primarily in an overseas context rather than in *Mitteleuropa* as such; see Paul Rohrbach, *Der deutsche Gedanke in der Welt* (Leipzig: Langewiesche, 1912); cf. Walter Mogk, *Paul Rohrbach und das “Größere Deutschland”: Ethischer Imperialismus im Wilhelminischen Zeitalter* (Munich: Goldmann, 1972), and Horst Bieber, *Paul Rohrbach, ein konservativer Publizist und Kritiker der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Verlag Dokumentation, 1972). As Matthew Jefferies notes: “After all, the Germans’ most enduring colonial fantasies were projected not on the jungles of Africa or Asia, but on the Teutonic equivalent of the ‘wild west’: *Mitteleuropa*, with its vast plains stretching eastward to the Russian steppes.” Jefferies, *Contesting the German Empire, 1871-1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 170-71.

³⁶ Steiner, *The Mission of the Individual Folk Souls in Relation to Teutonic Mythology*. Steiner himself thus emphasized that his threefolding ideas depended on the ethnic-racial scheme propounded in this book. Cf. Herbert Hahn, *Der Weg, der mich führte* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1969), 659-60. Steiner’s stance on national stature and spiritual potential remained consistent: “If one national civilization spreads more readily, and has greater spiritual fertility than another, then it is quite right that it should spread.” (Steiner, *The Threefold Commonwealth*, 183) In the words of his follower Ernst

When the unforeseen outcome of the war dashed anthroposophist hopes for realizing the threefold model, and widespread social and economic unrest thoroughly unsettled Germany and Austria, Steiner's attention shifted to portraying 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 proposals as a 'third way' between capitalism and Communism, Steiner devoted much of 1919 to promoting social threefolding to industrialists and business leaders, as well as to proletarian audiences in the newly formed workers councils.³⁷ Even 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."³⁸ At the same time, the social threefolding movement claimed to represent the harmonization of workers' interests and owners' interests.³⁹ This approach yielded a

Boldt, "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)

³⁷ For examples of Steiner's statements to various audiences, compare the lectures in Rudolf Steiner, *Die soziale Grundforderung unserer Zeit* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1990), Rudolf Steiner, *Neugestaltung des sozialen Organismus* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1963), and Steiner, *Betriebsräte und Sozialisierung*. In December 1918, anthroposophist Roman Boos declared that threefolding would save Germany from its two gravest threats: "von außen her die Heere der Alliierten und im Innern die revoltierende Arbeiterschaft": *Nachrichten der Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung* 24 (1969), 17. See also Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Steiner, Krieg und Revolution" *Christentum und Gegenwart* September 1919, 136-39, and the corporatist 'third way' argument for social threefolding in Karl Heyer, *Das Schicksal des deutschen Volkes und seine Not* (Stuttgart: Ernst Surkamp, 1932), 28-29.

³⁸ Steiner, *Threefold Commonwealth*, xxxii. According to his colleague Hans Kühn, "Democratization of the factories was something he [Steiner] opposed on principle. The manager had to be able to make his own arrangements without interference." Kühn, *Dreigliederungs-Zeit*, 52. Cf. Oskar Hermann, "Wirtschaftsdemokratie: Ein Zerrbild der Dreigliederung" *Anthroposophie* March 30, 1930, 98-100. Issue no. 10 of the journal *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* carried a two-page supplement devoted to distinguishing social threefolding from councilist tendencies; it is dated September 5, 1919, and signed by "Der Arbeitsausschuß des Bundes für Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus"; it declares threefolding to be "the mission of the German people." The early issues of *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*.

³⁹ For examples see Rudolf Steiner, *Soziale Zukunft* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1977); Rudolf Steiner, *Der innere Aspekt des sozialen Rätsels* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1972); Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz, *Politische Betrachtungen auf Grundlage der Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1920); Ernst Uehli, *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* (Stuttgart:

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 people.”⁴⁰ The resulting mélange of proposals resembled other organicist and corporatist economic and political models current at the time.⁴¹ What anthroposophists envisioned under the rubric of social threefolding ranged from vague utopias of an organic national community to straightforward calls for a *völkisch* state as a bulwark

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).

⁴⁰ See Steiner’s December 1919 essay “Der Weg zur Rettung des deutschen Volkes” in issue no. 24 of *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, reprinted in Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, 113-16; in English as “The Way to Save the German Nation” in Steiner, *The Renewal of the Social Organism*, 149-51. The July 1919 special issue of *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, addressed to the workers’ councils, caustically denounces the socialist parties and warns against the imminent “enslavement” of Germany by “the capitalism of the Entente,” declaring: “Der amerikanische Dollar rollt. Wißt ihr, was das bedeutet? Die geschwächte und ausgesogene deutsche Industrie wird mit dem amerikanischen Gelde unterstützt und leistungsfähig gemacht. Damit werden amerikanische Kapitalisten die Ausbeuter eurer Arbeitskraft werden und eure bisherigen Ausbeuter, die deutschen Industriellen, ihre Handlanger.” See also “Der Ausverkauf Deutschlands” in *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, no. 28 (January 1920), signed by “Die Schriftleitung.” Hans Erhard Lauer, *Ein Leben im Frühlicht des Geistes: Erinnerungen und Gedanken eines Schülers Rudolf Steiners* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1977), 35, reports that in 1918 Steiner emphasized threefolding as the alternative to Social Democracy.

⁴¹ For a full-fledged presentation from an anthroposophical perspective see Folkert Wilken, *Grundwahrheiten einer organischen Wirtschaft* (Zurich: Organisator, 1934). Steiner’s followers discerned similarities to the proposals of Silvio Gesell as well as the ‘social credit’ movement of C.H. Douglas; see Heinrich Nidecker, *Gesundung des sozialen Organismus nach den Vorschlägen von Rudolf Steiner und Silvio Gesell* (Bern: Pestalozzi-Fellenberg-Haus, 1926); Owen Barfield, “The Relation between the Economics of C.H. Douglas and those of Rudolf Steiner” *Anthroposophy: A Quarterly Review of Spiritual Science* 8 (1933), 272-85; Jakob Schellenberg, “Rudolf Steiner und Silvio Gesell” *Fragen der Freiheit* December 1982, 4-103; Hahn, *Der Weg, der mich führte*, 594-95. On the overlap between anthroposophical and Social Credit circles see John Finlay, *Social Credit: The English Origins* (McGill-Queens University Press 1972), 185, 232, 244; for Douglas’s approving view of Steiner’s threefolding principles see “The Control of Policy in Industry: Notes of a Lecture by Major C. H. Douglas” *The New Age* vol. 28 no. 6 (June 10, 1920), 85. On the central role of antisemitic conspiracy theories in Douglas’s work see C. B. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 182-86; Bob Hesketh, *Major Douglas and Alberta Social Credit* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 5, 17; Janine Stingel, *Social Discredit: Anti-Semitism, Social Credit, and the Jewish Response* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000). For a sympathetic account of Steiner’s views by an admirer of Gesell and Douglas, see Guido Giacomo Preparata, “Perishable Money in a Threefold Commonwealth: Rudolf Steiner and the Social Economics of an Anarchist Utopia” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 38 (2006), 619-48.

against Western democracy.⁴² In a pamphlet published in December 1918, at the downfall of the Wilhelmine empire and the birth of the Weimar republic, anthroposophist E. A. Karl Stockmeyer called for erecting a “völkischen Staat” in Germany rather than submitting to “the democracy imposed on us by the West.”⁴³

Threefolding ideals posited class cooperation rather than class conflict while distancing themselves from socialism, syndicalism, and proposals for a council republic. Though meant as a way to bolster community and solidarity, and as an antidote to what Steiner termed ‘egoism’, threefolding arguments were often premised on an emphatic individualism. In order to facilitate the unfolding of human creative capacities, Steiner favored a form of private ownership in which individual entrepreneurs and small groups of executives would manage private capital as a trust for the good of the whole community. He held that “capitalism is a necessary

⁴² See e.g. Wilhelm Blume, “Vom organischen Aufbau der Volksgemeinschaft,” and Siegfried Dorfner, “Deutschlands Wiederaufrichtung,” in *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, no. 46 (1920); Roman Boos, *Soziale Zukunft: Grundsätzliches zur Dreigliederung* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1921); Ernst von Hippel, *Die Universität im neuen Staat* (Königsberg: Gräfe und Unzer, 1933); Kurt von Wistinghausen, “Ganzheit und Gezweigung” *Die Christengemeinschaft* January 1934, 315-16; Ernst von Hippel, *Mensch und Gemeinschaft: Die Stufen des politischen Bewußtseins und die Aufgaben der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1935). In his July 1917 memoranda, Steiner characterized Western forms of democracy as “Anglo-American domination” over *Mitteleuropa*; see Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, 358. See also Roman Boos, “Deutschlands Platz an der Sonne” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, no. 4 (1919), which calls on German industrialists and workers to form a united front against “American capital”; 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, “Rudolf Steiner und unsere deutsche Lage” *Das Reich* July 1920, 191-96. Kühne, *Rudolf Steiners Lebenswerk*, argued in 1921 that Germany was threatened with “enslavement” by the Entente on one side and Bolshevism on the other, with threefolding as the only salvation. In the words of anthroposophist Ernst Boldt, the alternative to social threefolding was “the blight of Anglo-American imperialistic economics and a blend of Jesuitry combined with Bolshevism” (Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner*, 121).

⁴³ E. A. Karl Stockmeyer, *Vom deutschen Volksstaat und von der deutschen Erziehung* (Mannheim, 1918), 14. The pamphlet is dedicated to “Dem ganzen deutschen Volke und seinen unbesiegteten Helden.” According to Stockmeyer, Germany fought the war for the sake of all humankind: “Wir haben geblutet für den Fortschritt des Menschentums.” (4) Germany’s task now is to create “eine harmonische Form des völkischen Lebens”; this must be the goal of the “geistigen Kampf, den wir gleichzeitig gegen Osten und Westen ausfechten.” This spiritual battle demands “Festigkeit im Aufbau unserer völkischen Festung.” (15) Stockmeyer was a follower of Steiner from 1907 onward, when he joined both the Theosophical Society and Steiner’s Esoteric School. I discuss his role in founding the Waldorf movement in chapter 5.

component of modern life.”⁴⁴ In Steiner’s words: “The entire ownership of capital must be arranged so that the especially talented individual or the especially talented group of individuals comes to possess capital in a way which arises solely from their own personal initiative.”⁴⁵ In a full-fledged ‘threefold commonwealth’ Steiner foresaw a spiritualized meritocracy in which the “most capable” would be given effective control over economic resources, and he rejected the notion of tempering this arrangement through community oversight. He derided the idea of “transferring the means of production from private ownership into communal property” and insisted that “the management of the means of production must be left in the hands of the individual.”⁴⁶ In Steiner’s view, “The individual cannot make his abilities effective in business, if he is tied down in his work and decisions to the will of the community.”⁴⁷ Steiner denied that the exploitation of labor arises “from the economic order of capitalism”; for him the problem lay “not in capitalism, but in the misuse of spiritual talents.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *Westliche und östliche Weltgegensätzlichkeit* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1981), 302. On other occasions, Steiner portrayed capital as “the spiritual element within economic life.” (Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung*, 66) For extended anthroposophist treatments see Folkert Wilken, *Das Kapital* (Schaffhausen: Novalis, 1976), and Wilken, *The Liberation of Capital* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982). Steiner’s economic views were contradictory and inconsistent, and there are multiple conflicting elements in his works on the topic. For a partially divergent analysis see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1301-14.

⁴⁵ Steiner quoted in Walter Kugler, *Rudolf Steiner und die Anthroposophie* (Cologne: DuMont, 1978), 165. Kugler explains: “Each entrepreneur, that is each individual who wants to make use of his talents to satisfy the needs of others, will obtain capital for as long as he is able to make productive use of his talents.” (ibid.)

⁴⁶ Steiner in ibid., 199-200. He further insisted: “No-one can be allowed to return to economic forms in which the individual is tied to or limited by the community. We must strive instead for the very opposite.” (201)

⁴⁷ Steiner in Richard Seddon, ed., *Rudolf Steiner: Essential Readings* (Wellingborough: Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain, 1988), 106. Steiner continues: “Really practical thought, therefore, will not look to find the cure for social ills in a reshaping of economic life that would substitute communal for private management of the means of production. The endeavor should rather be to forestall the ills that can arise through management by individual initiative and personal worth, without impairing this management itself.”

⁴⁸ Steiner, *Der innere Aspekt des sozialen Rätsels*, 82. See also Emil Leinhas, “Kapitalverwaltung im dreigliedrigen sozialen Organismus” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* February 1920, and Thomas Brunner, “Kapitalverwaltung durch das Geistesleben” *Die Drei* February 2007, 38-48.

Advocates of social threefolding took varying approaches to the realization of these ideas. The concrete form that Steiner's proposals were supposed to take was a series of "corporations" governing economic life, with physical labor organized through producers' associations.⁴⁹ Notwithstanding the basic threefolding principle of autonomous social spheres, many of Steiner's formulations suggested that political decisions and economic exigencies were to be subordinated to the dynamics of the spiritual realm. Steiner wrote: "The spiritual organization will rest on a healthy basis of individual initiative, exercised in free competition amongst the private individuals suited to spiritual work." Within this framework, "the spiritual life should be set free, and given control of the employment of capital."⁵⁰ What this program amounted to was a vision of a spiritual aristocracy, the social complement to anthroposophy's esoteric spirituality.

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.⁵¹ Upper Silesia was a crucially important industrial area that belonged to Prussia before the referendum, and Steiner

⁴⁹ Steiner was insistent that these structures were not to function democratically: "Um Gottes willen keine Demokratie auf wirtschaftlichem Gebiet!" Steiner, *Vom Einheitsstaat zum dreigliedrigen sozialen Organismus*, 165. In this and other respects, social threefolding displays parallels with the phenomenon of "producerism" analyzed in Chip Berlet and Matthew Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America* (New York: Guilford, 2000).

⁵⁰ Steiner, *The Threefold Commonwealth*, 158, 117.

⁵¹ 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); Ralph Schattkowsky, *Deutschland und Polen von 1918/19 bis 1925: Deutsch-polnische Beziehungen zwischen Versailles und Locarno* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1994), 48-94; Kai Struve, ed., *Oberschlesien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg: Studien zum nationalen Konflikt und seiner Erinnerung* (Marburg: Herder-Institut, 2003); and Roland Baier, *Der deutsche Osten als soziale Frage: Eine Studie zur preußischen und deutschen Siedlungs- und Polenpolitik in den Ostprovinzen während des Kaiserreichs und der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1980), 127-47.

rejected the Allied-sponsored vote as an illegitimate interference of foreign powers in the affairs of *Mitteleuropa*.⁵² 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.⁵³ In January 1921 Steiner wrote a “Call to Save Upper Silesia” on behalf of the League for Social Threefolding.⁵⁴ 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 later explained, the aim was “to establish Upper Silesia as an integral territory that is inwardly united with the German spiritual essence.”⁵⁵

⁵² For additional background see Richard Tims, *Germanizing Prussian Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941); Peter-Christian Witt, “Zur Finanzierung des Abstimmungskampfes und der Selbstschutzorganisationen in Oberschlesien 1920-1922” *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 13 (1973), 59-76; Richard Blanke, “Upper Silesia 1921: The Case for Subjective Nationality” *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 2 (1975), 241-60; 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: Zur innenpolitischen Instrumentalisierung negativer Fremd- und Feindbilder* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 66-82; Kai Struve and Philipp Ther, eds., *Die Grenzen der Nationen: Identitätenwandel in Oberschlesien in der Neuzeit* (Marburg: Herder-Institut, 2002).

⁵³ Cf. Waldemar Grosch, *Deutsche und polnische Propaganda während der Volksabstimmung in Oberschlesien 1919 - 1921* (Dortmund: Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa, 2002); 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; Tooley, “The Polish-German Ethnic Dispute and the 1921 Upper Silesian Plebiscite” *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 24 (1997), 13-20; James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 214-66.

⁵⁴ Steiner, “Aufruf zur Rettung Oberschlesiens” in Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, 461-66; facsimile of original in Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung*, 264-65.

⁵⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Gegner* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2003), 328. For an ex post facto anthroposophist account see Walter Kugler, “Polnisch oder Deutsch? Oberschlesien, ein Schulbeispiel für die Notwendigkeit der Dreigliederung” *Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe* 93 (1986), 1-13.

This proposal initially received a somewhat sympathetic hearing among German communities in Silesia, while reactions from Polish Silesians were generally hostile.⁵⁶ In private sessions with Silesian anthroposophists in January 1921, Steiner emphasized that the very idea of a Polish state was “impossible” and “an illusion.”⁵⁷ 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.”⁵⁸ These formulations replicated longstanding assumptions about German cultural superiority and national identity. In the weeks before the plebiscite, the League for Social Threefolding declared that threefolding was the only way “for Germany to

⁵⁶ See the press reports reproduced in *Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe* 93 (1986), 20-32. There was evidently little anthroposophist presence in Upper Silesia itself; the threefolding campaign was largely waged from Breslau, in Lower Silesia. In addition, virtually none of the Silesian anthroposophists or threefolding advocates appears to have known Polish; according to anthroposophist Moritz Bartsch, one of the primary figures in the anthroposophist campaign in Upper Silesia, threefolding proponents had neither printed materials in Polish nor Polish speakers (ibid. 18). They perceived opposition primarily from Polish residents of the province, not from German residents; see the testimony from Bartsch, Hans Kühn and others in ibid., 14-17. Anthroposophist statements on Upper Silesia were consistently condescending toward the Polish population, as well as toward Polish political aspirations, 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.

⁵⁷ Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung*, 213; for an endorsement of this view see Kugler, “Polnisch oder Deutsch?,” 6. According to Steiner, Poland ought to remain divided as it had been for the previous several centuries; he considered the Polish people, except where it was Germanized, to consist of a feudal aristocracy and an uncivilized peasantry. “It is not possible to reconstruct any kind of Poland, to create a Polish state. [...] You can build it up, but it will always collapse again. In reality there will never be a Poland for any longer period of time, because it cannot exist, because at the decisive moment Poland must be divided, so that the Poles can develop their talents. Hence this Poland will never exist, and to speak of Poland today is an illusion” (Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung*, 212-13; cf. 207-08 and 245). “You see, precisely by studying the Polish essence, one can very accurately observe just how impossible it would be for a territory in such an exposed location [i.e. Upper Silesia] to vote in favor of simply entering the Polish element.” (ibid. 202)

⁵⁸ Karl Heyer, “Der Weg zur Lösung der oberschlesischen Frage” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* vol. 2 no. 31 (January 1921), 3-4. Ernst Uehli, “Ereignisse der Woche,” ibid., 2, declares that it is “obvious” that Germany must retain Upper Silesia’s economic resources: “in order to survive economically, Germany needs Upper Silesian coal”; Uehli further insists that “this demand cannot be achieved through plebiscite” but only through social threefolding.

escape from being strangled by the West, and to regain Germany's historical prestige."⁵⁹

The threefolding campaign in Upper Silesia nonetheless sparked bitter criticism from other Germans, not only on the right end of the political spectrum. Two weeks before the plebiscite, a harsh denunciation of the threefolding effort appeared in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, accusing anthroposophists of betraying Germany and spreading "Polish propaganda," charges which were subsequently aired in other parts of the press.⁶⁰ This response may have been due in part to a misunderstanding (critics of threefolding seem to have erroneously assumed that anthroposophists were urging abstention from the plebiscite), as well as to the fact that many Germans viewed any proposals which smacked of autonomy as treason.⁶¹ Steiner's caustic comments about the German political status quo, and the condition of Prussia in particular, may also

⁵⁹ 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."

⁶⁰ The unsigned article titled "Verräter am Deutschtum" was published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on March 4, 1921; it is reproduced in *Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe* 93 (1986), 38-39. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* retracted the charge of treason on March 15, 1921.

⁶¹ Waldemar Grosch, "Deutsche und polnische Propaganda in der Zeit der Aufstände und des Plebiszits" in Struve, ed., *Oberschlesien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, 63-95, describes the hostile reaction toward autonomy proposals: "Solche Überlegungen waren aber nicht zu tolerieren: In Deutschland empfand man sie als Hochverrat, in Polen hielt man sie für einen deutschen Trick, um die polnischen Ansprüche zu unterlaufen und ein autonomes Oberschlesien bei günstiger Gelegenheit wieder an das Reich anzuschließen." (72) See also Schattkowsky, *Deutschland und Polen*, 66-69 and 85-94. Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany*, 57-62, suggests that the point of autonomy proposals was to preserve German predominance. Grosch, *Deutsche und polnische Propaganda während der Volksabstimmung in Oberschlesien* emphasizes the constant internal hostilities and recriminations within the German camp, with different German groups and tendencies denouncing one another frequently. Grosch also underscores the importance of German assumptions about a "cultural gap" between Germans and Poles.

have played a role.⁶² The result was that anthroposophists were branded as insufficiently committed to German national integrity.⁶³

Such perceptions of the anthroposophist stance in the Upper Silesian conflict were wide of the mark. While protesting vociferously against the plebiscite as such, Steiner and his followers argued in favor of voting for Germany if the vote took place.⁶⁴ After the attack on threefolding appeared in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the League for Social Threefolding published an announcement in the same newspaper on March 12, 1921, under the title “Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus und Oberschlesien,” stating explicitly that their position was to vote for Germany. In the days surrounding the plebiscite, the editors of the threefolding newspaper declared: “Now that the vote is taking place, the League for Social Threefolding needless to say

⁶² See e.g. Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung*, 219, 231. Steiner held that in its current form, disfigured by the Entente and beholden to “impossible conditions,” Prussia was liable to “succumb to barbarity.”

⁶³ In an odd reversal, latter-day anthroposophists often depict the anthroposophist stance in the Upper Silesia struggle in terms similar to those used by critics of anthroposophy at the time, insisting that Steiner’s posture was neutral, anti-nationalist, and a principled repudiation of ethnic politics; indeed his rejection of Wilsonian self-determination is frequently adduced as evidence of such a position. For a recent instance of anthroposophical re-interpretation along these lines see Jens Heisterkamp, ed., *Die Jahrhundertillusion: Wilsons Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Völker, Steiners Kritik und die Frage der nationalen Minderheiten heute* (Frankfurt: Info3, 2002).

⁶⁴ Steiner first raised this possibility as a sort of compromise at the beginning of January 1921 in his discussions with Silesian threefolding activists; some elements within the threefolding movement evidently reasoned that a victory for Germany in the plebiscite would allow anthroposophist efforts in the province to continue, while a victory for Poland would spell the end of such endeavors. See Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung*, 231-32, and cf. 203, 217-19, and 250; Kugler, “Polnisch oder Deutsch?” 12-13; and Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Chronik*, 451. Anthroposophists today sometimes view Steiner’s January 1921 remarks as a simple rejection of the provisional vote option. I find this interpretation implausible, and it is contradicted by Kugler’s reading, as well by the anthroposophical editors of Steiner’s complete works; see e.g. the editorial note to Rudolf Steiner, *Die Verantwortung des Menschen für die Weltentwicklung durch seinen geistigen Zusammenhang mit dem Erdplaneten und der Sternwelt* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1989), 337: “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.”

takes the view that for every German there can be no other position than to vote for Germany.”⁶⁵ Two weeks later the editors explained:

In light of the fact of the plebiscite, the League for Social Threefolding firmly adopted the position of voting for Germany when possible, and the leadership of the League answered categorically every time it was asked that every person eligible to vote in the plebiscite was of course duty-bound to vote, and had to vote for Germany.⁶⁶

Steiner himself endorsed this stance and continued to maintain it after the plebiscite was completed.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ “Zusatz der Schriftleitung” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* vol. 2 no. 38 (dated March 22, 1921), 3; the plebiscite actually took place on March 20, 1921. In addition to emphasizing the spiritual differences between Slavs and Germans and propounding the German mission of bringing true enlightenment to Eastern Europe, 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. Anthroposophists also railed against “Polish terror” in the province; see e.g. Ernst Uehli, “Ereignisse der Woche” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* April 5, 1921, 1.

⁶⁶ Die Schriftleitung, “Dreigliederung und Oberschlesien” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* April 5, 1921, 3. Looking back on the Upper Silesia campaign a decade later, Karl Heyer wrote categorically that in the 1921 plebiscite “for the German there could be no other position than to vote in favor of Germany.” (Heyer, *Wie man gegen Rudolf Steiner kämpft*, 84) Heyer also notes that the Silesian anthroposophists did indeed vote for Germany. In January 1921, some anthroposophists viewed German nationalist groups in Upper Silesia, particularly the *Verband heimattreuer Oberschlesier*, as potential sympathizers of threefolding; see Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung*, 251 (here named as the “Verein heimattreuer Oberschlesier”). Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany*, describes the *Verband heimattreuer Oberschlesier* as “the organization most closely related in the public mind with the German cause” (157) and says they “specialized in atrocity propaganda” against the Poles (158) and formed “the first paramilitary groups” (185). Tooley reports that mainstream pro-German organizations in Upper Silesia “often clashed with the nationalist VHO, which tended to emphasize rather than smooth over the ethnic conflict.” (160) According to Tooley, the VHO was “the most visible and most blatantly anti-Polish plebiscite group” (189).

⁶⁷ On May 25, 1921, for example, Steiner angrily denied “that anthroposophy had shown its un-German and un-national aspect in its stance on the Upper Silesian question. Everybody who asked us for advice in that situation was told that whoever stands in our ranks should vote for Germany if the plebiscite comes. We never said anything different.” (Steiner, *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Gegner*, 328) For further elucidation see also *ibid.*, 555-56. In a February 1923 discussion with Steiner and threefolding activists involved in the Upper Silesian campaign, anthroposophist Hans Büchenbacher reported: “During the struggles around the plebiscite in Upper Silesia, many anthroposophist public speakers in Germany presented threefolding as the peaceful solution and the only healthy solution to the problem, whereupon accusations of treason appeared in the press. Our speakers were able to rebuff these accusations. After all, they could simply point to the fact that if it came to a plebiscite, the threefolding advocates would of course vote for Germany, and that Dr. Steiner himself said this clearly.” Rudolf Steiner, *Das Schicksalsjahr 1923 in der Geschichte der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1991), 389. For partisan perspectives on the plebiscite that give short shrift to Polish concerns see Helmut Neubach, “Die Abstimmung in Oberschlesien am 20. März 1921” in Richard Breyer, ed., *Deutschland und das Recht auf Selbstbestimmung nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*

When the accusation 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.⁶⁸ After the League of Nations partitioned the province in the wake of the plebiscite, 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.”⁶⁹ Several figures who went on to become prominent anthroposophists fought in German paramilitary

(Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1985), 92-129, and Sigmund Karski, “Der Abstimmungskampf in Oberschlesien 1920-1921” *Oberschlesisches Jahrbuch* 12 (1996), 137-62.

⁶⁸ Roman Boos, “Wer verrät das Deutschtum?” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* March 22, 1921, 2-3. Kühn, *Dreigliederungs-Zeit*, denounces critics of threefolding as “enemies of the German spirit” (62) and insists that threefolding is naturally attuned with “the German essence” (127). See also Friedrich Engelmann, *Ist die Dreigliederung undeutsch?* (Stuttgart, Der Kommende Tag, 1921). Engelmann declares that social threefolding comes directly from “the German national soul” and that “only Germany” can bring social threefolding to fruition, “for the salvation of the whole world” (11). Under threefolding, Engelmann explains, “wird das völkisch-kulturelle Einheitsgefühl stammverwandter Völker, die in verschiedenen politischen Staaten leben, gestärkt und damit die nationale Gesinnung gefördert und nicht gefährdet.” (13)

⁶⁹ Ernst Uehli, “Ereignisse der Woche” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* June 7, 1921, 2; Uehli was the journal’s editor. He blamed the loss of Upper Silesia on “der planmäßigen angelsächsischen Zerstückelungspolitik gegenüber dem bereits politisch niedergeknebelten Deutschland.” (ibid.) In the opening article in *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* November 3, 1921, Uehli complained: “A crucially significant part of German industry and raw materials is being given politically to bankrupt Poland.” He claimed that the “Western powers” imposed partition merely to create for themselves a “mighty economic position” in Poland. Such grievances are not borne out by subsequent historiography. F. Gregory Campbell, for example, writes that the provisions of the League of Nations partition plan “would allow the area to survive at least temporarily as an economic unit. Economic matters and minority disputes were to be handled by an ‘Upper Silesian Mixed Commission,’ to be composed equally of Germans and Poles as well as a neutral member. On the basis of population and territory, the boundary that was suggested by the League was as fair as any that had yet been proposed.” (Campbell, “The Struggle for Upper Silesia,” 384) Anthroposophists involved in the Upper Silesian campaign, however, 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; see e.g. Kühn, *Dreigliederungs-Zeit*, 125-27, and Ernst von Hippel, *Oberschlesien* (Königsberg: Gräfe und Unzer, 1931); von Hippel characterizes Poland as “an Asiatic despotism,” denounces the French, the English, Versailles, Wilson, and the League of Nations, and deplores the fact that German populations were now forced to live under Polish rule. Cf. also Walter Kühne, “Ostprogramm und deutscher Geist” *Anthroposophie* May 25, 1930, 163-65. Anthroposophist accounts repeated the same tropes during the Nazi era. Walter Abendroth, “Stunde der Bewährung” *Monatsschrift für das deutsche Geistesleben* October 1939, 567-70 rails against Wilson, “das Versailler Diktat,” its “Zerstückelung des deutschen Ostraums” and “das groteske polnische Staatsgebilde” etc. (567).

units in the Upper Silesian conflict as well.⁷⁰ Despite these circumstances, the charge of national unreliability continued to haunt anthroposophists throughout the Weimar period. From Steiner's perspective, however, the unfortunate outcome of the Upper Silesian campaign meant that the German mission had once again been obstructed, and Germany had still not been saved.⁷¹ Genuine salvation for Germany, in Steiner's eyes, would have meant not just deliverance from the clutches of foreign powers and recovery from the ravages of the war and the Versailles settlement, but a fundamental reform of Germany's political, economic, and cultural structures and a thoroughgoing restoration of the unrealized spiritual potential of the German nation.

The Upper Silesia episode underscored and amplified a range of anthroposophical antipathies against the prevailing post-war order. It reinforced the general anthroposophist hostility toward the Western powers as dedicated to the spiritual and cultural annihilation of Germany.⁷² It also confirmed Steiner's disdain for

⁷⁰ Both Max Karl Schwarz and Gottfried Richter fought in German paramilitary *Freikorps* units in Upper Silesia in 1921; see BA R58/6189/2: 579 and BA RK/I475: 2674. Erhard Bartsch also served as a volunteer in a German *Grenzschutz* regiment in Upper Silesia after World War I (BA R58/6223/1: 299). In Bartsch's words, he was active "im Grenzschutz gegen Polen und Tschechen" (BA RK/I18: 1910).

⁷¹ In a lecture on March 21, 1921, Steiner responded to criticism of his nationalist credentials as follows: "So lange aber dasjenige, was wahr ist, von seiten derer, die das Deutschtum in einer etwas eigentümlichen Weise gepachtet zu haben glauben, verleumdet wird, solange man von solchen Leuten Verräter am Deutschtum genannt wird, trotzdem dasjenige, was da gesagt wird, wenn es wirklich verstanden würde, einzig und allein geeignet wäre, dem wirklichen deutschen Volkstum seine ihm gebührende Stellung zu verschaffen, so lange kann es nicht besser werden." (Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges*, 380) Indeed Germany's world mission and Steiner's teachings sometimes merged into one. In *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* vol. 1 no. 15 (October 1919), Ernst Uehli wrote: "Solange das Lebenswerk Rudolf Steiners nicht allgemeine Aufnahme gefunden hat in Deutschland, solange hat man in Deutschland kein Recht, von einer Weltmission zu reden, solange wird Deutschland keine Weltmission haben." At the same time, anthroposophists denounced "the Pan-Germans" as "Germany's real betrayers"; see Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner*, 35. Boldt compared the pan-Germans to "the most decadent Jew, who may still be awaiting the Coming of some political and national Messiah." (120; cf. 201) For anthroposophists, the savior had already arrived in the figure of Steiner.

⁷² These beliefs have had a remarkably durable impact on anthroposophical thinking. In the words of a much later account: "Die Machtapparatur der Entente wurde zum Instrument von Kräften, die mit der militärischen Niederwerfung des Deutschen Reiches und Oesterreich-Ungarns auf eine geistig-kulturelle Auslöschung des Deutschtums abzielten." Wolfram Groddeck, *Eine Wegleitung durch die Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1979), 23. See also Karl Heyer, "Zur

the League of Nations, which he had opposed from the beginning, and strengthened his sense that Germany was trapped between the soulless West and the collectivist East.⁷³ This image had played an important part in Steiner's thinking for some time; in July 1918 he warned anthroposophists that the "German essence" was being "alienated" by "Americanism" on the one side and "Russiandom" on the other. According to Steiner, "fear of the spiritual is the characteristic element of Americanism," while the threat from "the East" was "socialism."⁷⁴ The notion of *Mitteleuropa* as an imperiled German ideal caught in a vise between East and West was by no means unique to Steiner and his followers; like many of the other ideas propounded by anthroposophists in this era, it was based on assumptions shared by a broad range of German thinkers and public figures, extending across much of political spectrum. The specific shape such ideas took within anthroposophical thought is nevertheless important to understanding anthroposophy's relationship to the political right.

The controversy over Upper Silesia provided the context for two further events that loom large in retrospective anthroposophist accounts of the period: a critical reference to Steiner by Adolf Hitler in March 1921, and the disruption of Steiner's lecture in Munich in May 1922. Hitler's derisive mention of Steiner, the sole reference to anthroposophy in the Nazi leader's works, appeared in an article published in the chief Nazi newspaper in the midst of the Upper Silesia dispute.⁷⁵ Hitler's article was

Anschlußbewegung" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* vol. 2 no. 49 (June 7, 1921), 3, and Engelmann, *Ist die Dreigliederung undeutsch?*, 9.

⁷³ On Steiner's rejection of the League of Nations see Rudolf Steiner, "Der Weg in den Wirren der Gegenwart" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* vol. 2 no. 20 (October 1920), and Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung*, 52.

⁷⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *Bewußtseins-Notwendigkeiten für Gegenwart und Zukunft* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1967), 405-08. See also Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges*, 42-44; Steiner, *Gegensätze in der Menschheitsentwicklung*, 147-66; Steiner, *Die Tempellegende und die Goldene Legende*, 255-56.

⁷⁵ Adolf Hitler, "Staatsmänner oder Nationalverbrecher?" *Völkischer Beobachter* March 15, 1921, reprinted in Adolf Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905-1924* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980), 348-53. A more detailed attack on Steiner appeared in the anonymous article "Steiner, der neue

an attack on German foreign minister Walter Simons, whom Hitler condemned for allegedly capitulating to the Allies in negotiations over the contested province. Relying on press reports about a supposed affiliation between Simons and Steiner, Hitler ridiculed Simons as “an intimate friend of the Gnostic and anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner, a supporter of the threefold social organism and whatever they call all of these Jewish methods for destroying the normal spiritual condition of the peoples.”⁷⁶ While Simons and Steiner were not in fact friends, much less intimate ones, the foreign minister had shown some interest in anthroposophical ideas.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, several anthroposophists harshly criticized Simons for failing to take Steiner’s doctrines seriously enough, and in some cases denounced Simons’ stance on

Messias” *Völkischer Beobachter* May 27, 1922. Dietrich Eckart also published a series of aggressively critical articles about Steiner in *Auf gut deutsch* in 1919. For an anthroposophist discussion see Andreas Bracher, “Der ‘Völkische Beobachter’ und Rudolf Steiner: Materialien zur Erhellung des Gegensatz-Verhältnisses von Nazibewegung und Anthroposophie nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg” *Der Europäer* January 2001, 29-34.

⁷⁶ Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen*, 350. Later in the article Hitler exclaims: “Und wer ist die treibende Kraft hinter all diesen Teufeleien? Der Jude! Freund des Doktor Rudolf Steiner, des Freundes Simons, des Geistlosen.” Rumors of Steiner’s influence on the foreign minister were based on stories in the Berlin press, particularly the *Vossische Zeitung*, in 1920 and 1921. These stories were officially denied at the time by both parties: a statement by the League for Social Threefolding was printed in the *Vossische Zeitung* on May 3, 1921, denying the association with Simons, while the Foreign Ministry, for its part, also denied the connection to Steiner, anthroposophy, and social threefolding; for details see Horst Gründer, *Walter Simons als Staatsmann, Jurist und Kirchenpolitiker* (Neustadt an der Aisch: Schmidt, 1975), 64. A statement dated April 22, 1921 from the League for Social Threefolding observed that Simons’ policies were obviously not an instance of social threefolding: “Dr. Simons und der Bund für Dreigliederung” BA R58/6192: 25.

⁷⁷ See e.g. Roman Boos, “Außenminister Simons zur Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* vol. 2 no. 10 (September 1920), 3-4, welcoming the claim in the *Vossische Zeitung* that Simons was a supporter of social threefolding, and characterizing threefolding as the “konsequente Verfolgung des von Simons ausgesprochenen sozialen Programmes.” Simons’ daughter was involved in anthroposophist circles, and Simons himself sympathized with various aspects of anthroposophy. Steiner first met with Simons at the Foreign Ministry in September 1920, and Simons visited the original Waldorf school in February 1921; Simons continued to express admiration for Steiner’s ideas for several years. For details see Steiner, *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Gegner*, 542-46, and *Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe* 27 (1969), 10-11. In February 1921 anthroposophist Emil Molt met with Simons at the Foreign Ministry to discuss the Upper Silesia plebiscite; according to Molt, Simons expressed explicit support for social threefolding at that meeting (*ibid.*, 545). Gründer, *Walter Simons*, 63-64, notes the corporatist nature of Simons’ economic views and observes that these views were partly influenced by Steiner’s threefolding doctrines. The *New York Times* obituary for Steiner (“Dr. Steiner, Theosophist, Dies” *New York Times* March 31, 1925) reported: “Opinions as to the social theories of Dr. Steiner were naturally varied. Dr. Simons, the former German Foreign Minister, was said to have pronounced “The Threefold State” the only possible remedy for Bolshevism.”

Upper Silesia in terms similar to Hitler's own.⁷⁸ Steiner himself denied any influence on Simons and condemned his role in the Upper Silesia negotiations.⁷⁹ Hitler's remark, in the context of his usual diatribes against the political representatives of the Weimar republic, can be understood as part of his overall skepticism toward would-be spiritual reformers.⁸⁰

The second event with roots in the Upper Silesia dispute was the disruption of Steiner's well-attended public lecture in the *Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten* in Munich on May 15, 1922.⁸¹ Anthroposophist descriptions of this incident provide conflicting accounts of the perpetrators and their intentions, with some blaming unidentified nationalist ruffians, some blaming Nazi agitators, others the Ludendorffers, and still others the Thule Society, while some claim that Steiner's antagonists attempted to

⁷⁸ For a particularly striking example see Ernst Boldt, *Rudolf Steiner: Ein Kämpfer gegen seine Zeit* (Munich: Rösl, 1921), 187-88. Further examples include Jürgen von Grone, "Mitteleuropäische Realpolitik" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, August 13, 1921, 2-3, which harshly criticizes Simons for capitulating to "Wilsonism" in the negotiations over Upper Silesia, and Engelmann, *Ist die Dreigliederung undeutsch?*, 10, which denounces Simons as a pliable tool of the Entente.

⁷⁹ See Steiner, *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Gegner*, 324-25, from Steiner's public lecture in Stuttgart on May 25, 1921; see also the parallel passages in Steiner, *Perspektiven der Menschheitsentwicklung* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1979), 123-24, from his lecture in Dornach on April 22, 1921. The notion that Simons had failed to stand up for German interests in the negotiations over Upper Silesia – the premise of both Hitler's and Steiner's complaints against him – was groundless. For a thorough account see Gründer, *Walter Simons*, 153-56 and 190-92; cf. Grosch, *Deutsche und polnische Propaganda*, 33 and 370-71, and Campbell, "Struggle for Upper Silesia," 373.

⁸⁰ George Mosse offers the following analysis: "Even as early as *Mein Kampf* Hitler severely criticized such Volkish "religious reformers." Considering Hitler's own view of nature mysticism and the "secret science," this might seem contradictory. However, his reasons for such criticism are illuminating. The Volkish leaders in general were in his eyes "sectarians" who must be crushed by the true "movement," but specifically these reformers weakened the fight against the common enemy: Jewry. They scattered the forces that were needed to wage this battle. Basically, Hitler's criticism of such men as Dinter was that they failed to focus their ideology on the Jews. This leads once more to our thesis that Hitler transformed the German revolution, of which many Volkish adherents dreamt, into an anti-Jewish revolution, and thereby concretized and objectified an ideology that had been too vague for the purposes of a mass movement. The spiritualist and theosophical ideas were thus relegated to the background and their adherents silenced or ignored." Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 306-07. For background on Dinter see George Kren and Rodler Morris, "Race and Spirituality: Arthur Dinter's Theosophical Antisemitism" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 6 (1991), 233-52, and Claudia Witte, "Artur Dinter – Die Karriere eines professionellen Antisemiten" in Barbara Danckwortt, ed., *Historische Rassismusforschung: Ideologen, Täter, Opfer* (Hamburg: Argument, 1995), 113-51.

⁸¹ On the role of the *Vier Jahreszeiten* as gathering place for the far-right milieu in Munich at the time see Phelps, "Before Hitler Came."

attack him physically or even to assassinate him.⁸² Eyewitness anthroposophist reports tell a less dramatic story. Rather than an assassination attempt, these first-hand sources depict a politically unaffiliated group in the audience who were hostile toward anthroposophy and interrupted the lecture with noise, turning out the lights, and similar tactics.⁸³ Although later anthroposophist portrayals of the incident may be exaggerated, the perception that Steiner and his followers were not fully dedicated to German national interests does seem to have motivated much of the *völkisch* enmity toward anthroposophy. In the eyes of his epigones, however, Steiner was a great German patriot, the outstanding contemporary representative of the true German spirit.⁸⁴

⁸² Guenther Wachsmuth, *Rudolf Steiners Erdenleben und Wirken* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1964), 470, reports an attempted attack on Steiner by “a few hotheads who had been confused by the usual untrue propaganda of our opponents”; Wehr, *Rudolf Steiner*, 327, attributes the attack to the Thule Society, and reports a rumor that Steiner was “eighth or ninth” on a supposed list of assassination targets; Karl Heise, *Der katholische Ansturm wider den Okkultismus* (Leipzig: Max Altmann, 1923), 94, offers a full-blown conspiracist version of the event, centered on a foiled right-wing assassination plot. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 8, says the Ludendorffers were responsible for disrupting the lecture and provoking a melee. A detailed first-hand description is available in Hans Büchenbacher, “München 1922” in Beltle and Vierl, eds., *Erinnerungen an Rudolf Steiner*, 323-26. Lindenberger, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Biographie*, 770, provides a thorough account of the incident, does not mention an assassination attempt, and does not attribute the event to Nazis, Ludendorffers, or any *völkisch* agitators. On the convoluted relationships between Ludendorffers and Nazis during the period see Bruno Thoss, “Ludendorff und Hitler 1920-1922” in Thoss, *Der Ludendorff-Kreis 1919-1923* (Munich: Wölfle, 1978), 249-61.

⁸³ See e.g. the comprehensive contemporary report by Paul Baumann, “Dr. Rudolf Steiners Vortrag in München,” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* May 25, 1922, 4-5, which says nothing about an assassination attempt and does not mention the Nazis. See also the memoir by anthroposophist Elisabeth Klein, who was on stage with Steiner at the 1922 event; Klein’s thorough description makes no mention of an attempted assassination or Nazis or right-wingers, merely reporting that a “hostile group” tried to “disrupt the lecture”: Elisabeth Klein, *Begegnungen* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1978), 45-46.

⁸⁴ See e.g. Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner und das Deutschtum* (Munich: Kaiser, 1921); Felix Kersten, “Rudolf Steiner und das Deutschtum” *Die Drei* December 1925, 669-73; Emil Leinhas, “Rudolf Steiners Aufruf an das deutsche Volk und an die Kulturwelt” *Anthroposophie* March 3, 1929, 75. For comparative purposes see Christian Jansen’s insightful examination of ideas about the ‘German essence’ and the ‘German soul’ and the ‘German spiritual mission’ among German intellectuals between 1914 and 1935: 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; cf. also Hans Mommsen, “Aufbruch zur Nation: Irrwege des deutschen Nationalismus in der Zwischenkriegsepoche” in Mommsen, *Von Weimar nach Auschwitz: Zur Geschichte Deutschlands in der Weltkriegsepoche* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999), 44-57.

These conflicting views of anthroposophy and its founder contributed to the complicated relationship between Steiner's movement and the *völkisch* milieu. From an early stage, anthroposophists had notably positive ties to *völkisch* cultural politics. One expression of this ongoing affinity was the pronounced anthroposophical sympathy toward Wagnerian themes.⁸⁵ Steiner was a member of the *Richard Wagner Gesellschaft für germanische Kunst und Kultur*, founded in Berlin in 1903.⁸⁶ Various anthroposophist authors explicitly endorsed Wagner's views on "blood," race, Aryans, and related topics, as Steiner had before them.⁸⁷ Steiner's Theosophical Society also

⁸⁵ Examples include Carl Albert Friedenreich, *Richard Wagner im Lichte der Anthroposophie* (Buenos Aires: Otto Mickein Verlag, 1944); Johannes Bertram, *Der Seher von Bayreuth: Deutung des Lebens und Werkes Richard Wagners* (Berlin: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1943); Hermann Beckh, *Richard Wagner und das Christentum* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1933); Richard Karutz, "Götterdämmerung" *Anthroposophie* February 1933, 138-40; Hans Erhard Lauer, "Richard Wagners Werk als künstlerisches und geistesgeschichtliches Phänomen" *Das Goetheanum* June 2, 1935, 171-72; Otto Crusius, "Der Mensch und die Elemente in Richard Wagners 'Nibelungenring'" *Die Christengemeinschaft* January 1934, 298-301; "Nachruf für Cosima Wagner" *Anthroposophie* April 20, 1930, 127; Ernst Uehli, *Die Geburt der Individualität aus dem Mythos als künstlerisches Erlebnis Richard Wagners* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1921; second edition Dresden, 1937); Otto Julius Hartmann, *Die Esoterik im Werk Richard Wagners* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1960); Ernst Uehli, *Richard Wagners mythisches Lebensbild* (Stuttgart: Mellinger, 1953); in the latter work see in particular chapter 10, "Die nordisch-germanische Mythologie und der Ring des Nibelungen," which comprises a third of the book. Cf. Steiner, "Richard Wagner und die Mystik" in Rudolf Steiner, *Die Erkenntnis des Übersinnlichen in unserer Zeit und deren Bedeutung für das heutige Leben* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1986), 207-39. For Steiner's endorsement of Wagner's racial views see chapter 1 above.

⁸⁶ Hildegard Chatellier, "Wagnerismus in der Kaiserzeit" in Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, eds., *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung'*, 608; according to Chatellier, Steiner's involvement indicates Wagnerism's "affinity to theosophical influences." Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918* vol. II, 606, also characterizes Wagner-Vereine circa 1900 as *völkisch* organizations. For additional context see Winfried Schüler, *Der Bayreuther Kreis von seiner Entstehung bis zum Ausgang der Wilhelminischen Ära: Wagnerkult und Kulturreform im Geiste völkischer Weltanschauung* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1971); Wolfgang Altgeld, "Wagner, der 'Bayreuther Kreis' und die Entwicklung des völkischen Denkens" in Ulrich Müller, ed., *Richard Wagner 1883-1983: Die Rezeption im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1984), 35-64; Veit Veltzke, *Vom Patron zum Paladin: Wagnervereinigungen im Kaiserreich von der Reichsgründung bis zur Jahrhundertwende* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1987); Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, *Deutsche Mythologie: Die Erfindung einer nationalen Kunstreligion* (Berlin: Philo, 2000).

⁸⁷ Johannes Bertram, *Goethes Faust im Blickfeld des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg: Hamburger Kulturverlag, 1949), 117-18, praises Wagner's writings on blood and race; Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner als Führer zu neuem Christentum* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1933), 86-87, quotes Wagner at length on racial decline through blood mixture; Sigismund von Gleich, "Richard Wagner über Blut und Geist" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* August 1933, 17-18, extols Wagner's glorification of the 'Aryan race'; see also the similar treatment in Hugo Wetzell, "Heldentum und Christentum" *Die Christengemeinschaft* March 1937, 367-69. In 1963, anthroposophists still celebrated Wagner's views on "Blut" and "Rasse"; see Matthäus Reisch, "Richard Wagner und unser Jahrhundert" *Die Drei* June 1963, 161-67. Cf. the selections from Steiner, "Richard

served as a way-station for leading cultural figures in the *völkisch* movement, including the artist Fidus.⁸⁸ In addition, *völkisch* authorities such as Hans Hahne were significantly influenced by Steiner and anthroposophy.⁸⁹ Steiner and other anthroposophists also held *völkisch* predecessors such as Paul de Lagarde in high esteem.⁹⁰

Wagner in the Light of Anthroposophy” in John Fletcher, *Art Inspired by Rudolf Steiner* (London: Mercury Arts, 1987), 136-37. For an early example of the cross-pollination of Wagnerian and theosophical race thinking see Harald Grävell, “Der arische Gedanke” *Bayreuther Blätter* 25 (1902), 235-50; for later occultist appropriations of Wagner’s racial theories cf. Corinne Heline, *Esoteric Music Based on the Musical Seership of Richard Wagner* (Los Angeles: New Age Press, 1953). For background see Leon Stein, *The Racial Thinking of Richard Wagner* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950); Tibor Kneif, “Wagner und der Antisemitismus” in Kneif, ed., *Richard Wagner: Die Kunst und die Revolution*, 114-130; Marc Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Jacob Katz, *Richard Wagner: Vorbote des Antisemitismus* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1985); Hartmut Zelinsky, *Richard Wagner, ein deutsches Thema: Eine Dokumentation zur Wirkungsgeschichte Richard Wagners, 1876-1976* (Vienna: Medusa, 1983); Hannu Salmi, *Imagined Germany: Richard Wagner’s National Utopia* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1999); Saul Friedländer und Jörn Rüsen, eds., *Richard Wagner im Dritten Reich* (Munich: Beck, 2000). For an indignant anthroposophical response to critical scholarship on Wagner see Arne von Kraft, “Die ‘Verhitlerung’ Richard Wagners: Eine alt-neue ‘Enthüllungs’-Geschichte als Zeitsymptom” *Die Drei* November 1997, 1094-1102; Kraft cites anthroposophist and Nazi sympathizer Walter Abendroth in support of his case.

⁸⁸ On Fidus (Hugo Höppener) and the *völkisch* movement see Janos Frecot, Johann Friedrich Geist, and Diethart Kerbs, *Fidus, 1868 – 1948: Zur ästhetischen Praxis bürgerlicher Fluchtbewegungen* (Hamburg: Rogner & Bernhard, 1997), and Marina Schuster, “Fidus – ein Gesinnungskünstler der völkischen Kulturbewegung” in Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, *Handbuch zur ‘Völkischen Bewegung’*, 634-50. Fidus sided with Steiner’s adversaries in the 1912/1913 split from the Theosophical Society; on the relationship between Steiner and Fidus see Frecot et al., *Fidus*, 131-46.

⁸⁹ Hans Hahne (1875–1935) was a leading *völkisch* authority on prehistory, archeology, and early folklore. He joined the Nazi party in the 1920s and was named rector of the University of Halle in 1933. For background on Hahne’s career see Ingo Wiwjorra, “German archaeology and its relation to nationalism and racism” in Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Timothy Champion, eds., *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe* (Boulder: Westview, 1996), 164-88, and Uta Halle, “Die Externsteine sind bis auf weiteres germanisch!” *Prähistorische Archäologie im Dritten Reich* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2002), 35, 104, 169; on Steiner’s influence on Hahne see Irene 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, especially 421-25, and Irene Ziehe, *Hans Hahne: Biographie eines völkischen Wissenschaftlers* (Halle: Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte, 1996), 38-42, 17, 59, 73, 100. Ziehe provides a detailed discussion of Hahne’s adoption of anthroposophical cosmology in relation to Hahne’s Germanocentric theories. In this sense, Hahne as *völkisch* expert and Nazi scientist might be considered an example of the impact of Steiner’s teachings beyond the confines of anthroposophy proper. Hahne’s son in law was the anthroposophist pastor and early Nazi leader Friedrich Benesch, discussed below in the Conclusion.

⁹⁰ In 1915 Steiner praised Lagarde’s views on “das deutsche Volkstum,” distinguishing them from “materialist” accounts of blood and race: Steiner, *Aus schicksaltragender Zeit*, 224-26. For additional extremely positive remarks on Lagarde see Steiner, *Unsere Toten: Ansprachen, Gedenkworte und Meditationssprüche* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1984), 82-92. Further anthroposophical

Perhaps the most important instance of synthesis between anthroposophical and *völkisch* ideals and cultural practices was the writer Friedrich Lienhard (1865-1929), who was both an anthroposophist and a leading representative of “idealistic antisemitism” within *völkisch* ranks.⁹¹ Lienhard, who joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1913, also had significant ties to ariosophy.⁹² Steiner was an enthusiastic

celebrations of Lagarde include Ernst Surkamp, “Geistes-Lichtgedanken” *Anthroposophie* August 7, 1924, 1-3; Eduard Schulz, “Paul de Lagarde als Wegbereiter eines neuen Christentums” *Die Christengemeinschaft* February 1939, 291-94; Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner*, vi-viii; Heyer, *Das Schicksal des deutschen Volkes*, 15-17; Liselotte Krings-Hartmann, “Paul de Lagarde zum siebzigsten Todestage” *Die Drei* January 1962, 48-51. See also the quotations from Lagarde in *Anthroposophie* April 12, 1923, 7; *Die Christengemeinschaft* January 1939, 280; and the back page of *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, no. 14 (October 1919). For background see Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 78-85, 221-23, 243-44; Eva Reichmann, *Hostages of Civilisation: The Social Sources of National Socialist Anti-Semitism* (Boston: Beacon, 1951), 157-58; Stern, *Politics of Cultural Despair*, 3-94; Doris Mendlewitsch, *Volk und Heil: Vordenker des Nationalsozialismus im 19. Jahrhundert* (Rheda: Daedalus, 1988), 116-155; Ina Ulrike Paul, “Paul Anton de Lagarde” in Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, *Handbuch zur ‘Völkischen Bewegung’*, 45-93; Robert Lougee, *Paul de Lagarde, 1827-1891: A Study of Radical Conservatism in Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); and Ulrich Sieg, *Deutschlands Prophet: Paul de Lagarde und die Ursprünge des modernen Antisemitismus* (Munich: Hanser, 2007).

⁹¹ For background on Lienhard and “idealistic antisemitism” see Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung*, 54-57, 71-78, 143-48, 280-85; Breuer, *Die Völkischen in Deutschland*, 27, 87, 99, 118; Hildegard Chatellier, “Friedrich Lienhard” in Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, *Handbuch zur ‘Völkischen Bewegung’*, 114-30; Roderick Stackelberg, *Idealism Debased: From völkisch Ideology to National Socialism* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1981), 63-101; Hildegard Chatellier, “Kreuz, Rosenkreuz und Hakenkreuz. Synkretismus in der Weimarer Zeit am Beispiel Friedrich Lienhards” in Manfred Gangl and Gérard Raullet, eds., *Intellektuellendiskurse in der Weimarer Republik: Zur politischen Kultur einer Gemengelage* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1994), 53-65; 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; cf. Klatt, *Theosophie und Anthroposophie*, 281. Stackelberg, *Idealism Debased*, 93, reports that Lienhard rejected anthroposophy later in life. This is confirmed by contemporary anthroposophist accounts; Wilhelm Kunze, “Friedrich Lienhard und der Idealismus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts” *Anthroposophie* October 11, 1925, 170, states that Lienhard joined Steiner’s movement in 1910 and distanced himself in the early 1920s, while Ernst Boldt, *Steiner und das Epigonentum* (Munich: Rösl, 1923), 31-91, criticizes Lienhard as a recent anthroposophical apostate. Lienhard’s own ambivalent reckoning with the movement is respectful and sympathetic toward Steiner but critical of the recent development and public profile of anthroposophy; see Friedrich Lienhard, “Steiners Anthroposophie” in Lienhard, *Der Meister der Menschheit* (Stuttgart: Greiner & Pfeiffer, 1926), 121-34. Lienhard rejected social threefolding in particular as “dilettantism” (126) and criticized the worshipful anthroposophical attitude toward Steiner. For further context see the extensive excerpts from a 1912 letter from Lienhard, showing him as an outspoken supporter of Steiner, in Levy, *Rudolf Steiners Weltanschauung und ihre Gegner*, 317-21.

⁹² Ariosophist Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels wrote four reviews of Lienhard’s works between 1913 and 1915; see Ekkehard Hieronimus, *Lanz von Liebenfels: Eine Bibliographie* (Toppenstedt: Berg, 1991), 136-37, 142. Lienhard was also on good terms with the ariosophist Johannes Balzli. Lienhard helped introduce Guido von List to a German readership; see Breuer, *Die Völkischen in Deutschland*, 92.

supporter of Lienhard, and praised his World War One text *Deutschlands europäische Sendung* in particular.⁹³ This tract gives eloquent expression to anthroposophist attitudes toward the war, portraying the German troops as carriers of love and 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.”⁹⁴ Lienhard had a conflicted relationship with comparatively ‘materialist’ versions of racial thought, endorsing some ideas of Gobineau, Chamberlain, and Günther, while rejecting others.⁹⁵ His work can be seen as a microcosm of both the conflict and the convergence between esoteric and *völkisch* modes of thought.

A further instance of this dynamic played itself out in the complicated interactions between anthroposophy and the circle around the publisher Eugen Diederichs (1867-1930), an important figure in *Lebensreform* efforts. His publishing house, the Eugen Diederichs Verlag, was a crucial institutional factor in the spread of theosophical ideas in Wilhelmine Germany, and a central component in the broad

⁹³ Steiner, *Aus schicksaltragender Zeit*, 288; cf. Steiner, *Gegenwärtiges und Vergangenes im Menschengeste*, 10 (referring in 1916 to Lienhard as a supporter of “our movement”); Steiner, *Occult History*, 97; and Steiner, *Briefe* vol. II, 596. According to a semi-official anthroposophist account, Lienhard initially came into contact with Steiner and his teachings in 1905, inspired many members of the Youth Movement to explore anthroposophy, and joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1913, but “from 1919 onward he was less and less able to identify with the anthroposophical culture impulse.” 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. Vögele notes that Steiner nonetheless continued to hold Lienhard in high esteem. Vögele denies Lienhard’s antisemitism and characterizes his worldview merely as “humanitarian-idealistic.”

⁹⁴ Friedrich Lienhard, *Deutschlands europäische Sendung* (Stuttgart: Greiner & Pfeiffer, 1914), second edition 1915. Lienhard writes of the war: “Wenn die Reiche der Mitte diese Probe bestanden haben, so wird der Beweis erbracht sein, daß der deutsche Geist zur Führung Europas berufen ist.” (11) Germany’s mission, according to Lienhard, is “die seelische Höherführung der Völker.” (14) For context see also Fries, *Die große Katharsis*, 83-89.

⁹⁵ See e.g. Lienhard, “Der Kern der Rassenfrage” in Friedrich Lienhard, *Wege nach Weimar* vol. I (Stuttgart: Greiner & Pfeiffer, 1911), 38-50; cf. 55-63 and 255-56. Stackelberg, *Idealism Debated*, 90, writes: “These apparently enlightened views did not, however, show his tolerance so much as his opposition to materialism [...] 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.” Stackelberg further notes that while Lienhard rejected strict biological determinism and merely materialist conceptions of race, “he had no difficulty in accepting racist assumptions and findings once he had translated them into ‘idealist’ terms.” (100)

stream of *völkisch* cultural activities as well.⁹⁶ Steiner offered Diederichs a book manuscript in 1904, expressing his high regard for the publisher.⁹⁷ According to one study, Diederichs was “energetic in championing anthroposophy” and cooperated readily with Steiner.⁹⁸ Anthroposophical publications and bookstores, meanwhile, promoted the publisher’s works.⁹⁹ Diederichs was also on friendly terms with anthroposophists Otto Lerchenfeld, Gottfried Haaß-Berkow, and Friedrich Rittelmeyer.¹⁰⁰ During the war and the immediate post-war period, Diederichs’ own

⁹⁶ On Diederichs see 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, ed. *Versammlungsort moderner Geister: Der Eugen Diederichs Verlag - Aufbruch ins Jahrhundert der Extreme* (Munich: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1996); Justus Ulbricht und Meike Werner, eds., *Romantik, Revolution und Reform: Der Eugen Diederichs Verlag im Epochenkontext 1900–1949* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999); Meike Werner, *Moderne in der Provinz: Kulturelle Experimente im Fin de Siècle Jena* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003), 63-193; Justus Ulbricht, “Durch ‘deutsche Religion’ zu ‘neuer Renaissance’: Die Rückkehr der Mystiker im Verlagsprogramm von Eugen Diederichs” in Baßler and Chatellier, eds., *Mystik, Mystizismus und Moderne*, 165-86; Gangolf Hübinger, “Eugen Diederichs’ Bemühungen um die Grundlegung einer neuen Geisteskultur” in Mommsen, ed., *Kultur und Krieg*, 259-74; Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology*, 52-63. On the development of the publishing house after Diederichs’ death, and particularly during the Third Reich, see Florian Triebel, *Der Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1930-1949: Ein Unternehmen zwischen Kultur und Kalkül* (Munich: Beck, 2004).

⁹⁷ Steiner’s very friendly 1904 letter to Diederichs is reprinted in Ulf Diederichs, ed., *Eugen Diederichs: Selbstezeugnisse und Briefe von Zeitgenossen* (Düsseldorf: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1967), 145-46. Responding to a request from Diederichs that he submit a manuscript on mysticism, Steiner wrote: “Es läge mir nur sehr viel daran, daß das Buch in Ihrem von mir sehr geschätzten Verlage erschiene.” (146) Diederichs did not in fact publish any of Steiner’s works. Cf. Steiner, *Briefe* vol. II, 439, 592-93. Stark, *Entrepreneurs of Ideology*, 74, confirms that “Diederichs solicited theosophical manuscripts from Steiner, who in turn praised the EDV highly for its various theosophical activities.” Stark also refers to Diederichs’ “close working relationship” with Steiner. Diederichs and Steiner met at a lecture by Steiner in Jena some time before 1914.

⁹⁸ Stark, *Entrepreneurs of Ideology*, 74. Stark’s claim may be overstated; he cites the works of Gertrud Prellwitz, published by the EDV, as anthroposophical. Like Fidus, however, Prellwitz remained in the Theosophical Society after Steiner left to form the Anthroposophical Society; cf. Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 174, 189, 207, 373; Frecot et al., *Fidus*, 115-17, 252-58; Klatt, *Theosophie und Anthroposophie*, 243-52; and Norbert Klatt, *Der Nachlaß von Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden in der Niedersächsischen Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen* (Göttingen: Klatt, 1996), 100, 225.

⁹⁹ In 1925, for example, the anthroposophist journal *Der Pfad* promoted the book series “Deutsche Volkheit” from the Eugen Diederichs Verlag, which were also available via the anthroposophical bookstore in Berlin.

¹⁰⁰ See Irmgard Heidler, *Der Verleger Eugen Diederichs und seine Welt (1896-1930)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 307; Lulu von Strauß, *Eugen Diederichs Leben und Werk* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1936), 151; and Werner, *Moderne in der Provinz*, 148.

essays exhibited a number of noteworthy parallels to Steiner's works.¹⁰¹ While Diederichs was interested in Steiner's ideas, however, he reportedly considered Steiner "too authoritarian."¹⁰²

From 1913 onward, Diederichs edited and published the journal *Die Tat*, which became an important clearinghouse for a variety of right-wing intellectuals, including thinkers associated with the 'Conservative Revolution' tendency.¹⁰³ 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."¹⁰⁴ In February 1921 the journal devoted an entire issue to critical discussion of anthroposophy. The issue contained essays on anthroposophical spirituality and on 'social threefolding' and included both anthroposophist and non-anthroposophist authors.¹⁰⁵ Among the anthroposophist

¹⁰¹ See Eugen Diederichs, *Politik des Geistes* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1920), a collection of his articles from *Die Tat* from 1914 through 1919. Among the parallels to Steiner's teachings are Diederichs' spiritual conception of *Deutschtum*, the similarities to Steiner's 'social threefolding' model (e.g. 45, 167-69), and the rejection of "Intellektualismus und Materialismus" (e.g. 54).

¹⁰² Heidler, *Der Verleger Eugen Diederichs*, 307. According to an anthroposophist source, "Diederichs war wohl gewillt, die aus der Anthroposophie quellende Tat und Gesinnung zu respektieren – so begeisterte er sich z. B. für die Waldorfschul-Pädagogik – aber die Anthroposophie selbst (als den Baum, der große Früchte trägt) lehnte er ab." Wilhelm Salewski, "Dreigliederung oder totaler Staat?" *Anthroposophie* August 30, 1931, 276.

¹⁰³ Cf. 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); Edith Hanke and Gangolf Hübinger, "Von der 'Tat'-Gemeinde zum 'Tat'-Kreis: Die Entwicklung einer Kulturzeitschrift" in Hübinger, ed., *Versammlungsort moderner Geister*, 299-334; Gangolf 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. For latter-day anthroposophist praise of the 'Conservative Revolution' see Karen Swassjan, *Unterwegs nach Damaskus: Zur geistigen Situation zwischen Ost und West* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1993), 105-29.

¹⁰⁴ Ernst Boldt, "Philosophie und Theosophie" *Die Tat* November 1918, 595-610, and Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Anthroposophie und religiöse Erneuerung" *Die Tat* September 1921, 445-59; see also Rittelmeyer, "Zur Steinerschen Theosophie" *Die Tat* January 1919, 794-95.

¹⁰⁵ See *Die Tat: Monatsschrift für die Zukunft deutscher Kultur*, "Anthroposophisches Sonderheft" vol. 12 no. 11 (February 1921). The lead essay is an informed critique of anthroposophy by professor of religion Jakob Wilhelm Hauer; I discuss his later work in chapter 6. The lengthiest anthroposophist contribution, by Walter Johannes Stein, consists largely of extended quotations from Steiner's works, including several elaborating Steiner's theory of "racial spirits." Diederichs himself contributed a brief piece outlining his skeptical attitude toward anthroposophy. See also the two shorter discussions of anthroposophy in the following issue: Richard Seebohm, "Bücher von und über Rudolf Steiner" *Die Tat*

contributions was a detailed presentation of anthroposophy's social thought.¹⁰⁶ Even though anthroposophist perspectives were amply represented, and several of the critical contributors expressed significant sympathy for various aspects of anthroposophy, Steiner responded to *Die Tat*'s treatment of his teachings with indignation.¹⁰⁷

Early anthroposophy's relations with the *völkisch* milieu, with nationalist circles, and with the cross-fertilization of right and left cultural politics in the Weimar era were thus marked by considerable ambivalence. To an extent, this had to do with the heterogeneous character of *völkisch* thinking itself; the category not only remains somewhat nebulous within later historiography, it was an impressively versatile and protean term to begin with, encompassing a conspicuously broad spectrum of ideas and activities at the time.¹⁰⁸ But much of the ambivalent response of *völkisch* figures

March 1921, 950-51, and Friedrich Gogarten, "Bücher zur Kritik der Anthroposophie" *ibid.* 951-52. Anthroposophist Otto Julius Hartmann wrote for *Die Tat* in 1934; cf. O. J. Hartmann, "Abt und Literat" *Die Tat* October 1934, 550-53.

¹⁰⁶ Richard Seebohm, "Dreigliederung des sozialen Lebens" *Die Tat* February 1921, 832-39. Seebohm was the leader of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Jena, where the Eugen Diederichs Verlag and *Die Tat* were based. During World War One he served as a lieutenant colonel on the German general staff.

¹⁰⁷ See Steiner, *Perspektiven der Menschheitsentwicklung*, 163-64, and Steiner, *Die Verantwortung des Menschen für die Weltentwicklung*, 202-04, 212-19.

¹⁰⁸ There are many insightful studies of the *völkisch* phenomenon, but relatively little consensus on its parameters and distinguishing marks; for a variety of perspectives see Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung*; Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, eds., *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung'*; Breuer, *Die Völkischen in Deutschland*; Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology*; Hermand, *Der alte Traum vom neuen Reich*; von See, *Freiheit und Gemeinschaft*; Walter Schmitz and Clemens Vollnhals, eds., *Völkische Bewegung - Konservative Revolution - Nationalsozialismus: Aspekte einer politisierten Kultur* (Dresden: Thelem, 2005); Uwe Puschner, "Strukturmerkmale der völkischen Bewegung (1900-1945)" in Grunewald and Puschner, eds., *Das konservative Intellektuellenmilieu in Deutschland*, 445-68; Stefan Breuer, *Grundpositionen der deutschen Rechten 1871-1945* (Tübingen: diskord, 1999), 80-89, 148-55; Michael Kater, "Die Artamanen – Völkische Jugend in der Weimarer Republik" *Historische Zeitschrift* 213 (1971), 577-638; Ulrich Herbert, "'Generation der Sachlichkeit': Die völkische Studentenbewegung der frühen zwanziger Jahre in Deutschland" in Frank Bajohr, Werner Johe, and Uwe Lohalm, eds., *Zivilisation und Barbarei: Die widersprüchlichen Potentiale der Moderne: Detlev Peukert zum Gedenken* (Hamburg: Christians, 1991), 115-44; Wedemeyer, "'Zum Licht': Die Freikörperkultur in der wilhelminischen Ära und der Weimarer Republik zwischen Völkischer Bewegung, Okkultismus und Neuheidentum"; 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; Uwe Puschner, "Völkisch. Plädoyer für einen 'engen'

to anthroposophy, and of anthroposophists to the palette of interwar nationalist themes, stemmed from the unusual nature of Steiner's racial and ethnic doctrines and the concomitant anthroposophical claim to higher spiritual wisdom regarding the German essence and the national soul.¹⁰⁹ In spite of this dynamic, or perhaps as a result of it, the borders separating anthroposophy, other occult and esoteric groups, various *völkisch* tendencies, and the array of *Lebensreform* associations and similar trends were notably porous, with substantial overlap not just in ideas but in personnel as well. Ariosophist texts could be found in pan-German publications, for example,

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. While more precise usage of the term *völkisch* is a historiographical desideratum, Oliver Piecha's remarks on the broad resonance of *völkisch* themes are equally apposite: "Die völkischen Gruppen und Grüppchen der germanischen Ordensgründer, Wotansgläubigen und arischen Züchtungsideologen waren nicht mehr oder weniger als der *lunatic fringe* eines viel breiter angelegten Wirkungsfeldes, das sich beunruhigenderweise nur sehr schwer abgrenzen lässt – von der deutschen Gesellschaft insgesamt. Bezeichnend war das Gemeinsame, nicht das Trennende, das diese völkische Subkultur mit dem *mainstream* deutscher Diskurse und Denkmuster in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts verband." Piecha, "Das Weltbild eines deutschen Diätarztes," 120. Piecha mentions the concepts of a German historical mission and of a German rebirth as particularly influential in this regard. On the widespread currency of *völkisch* nationalism see also 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.

¹⁰⁹ For comparative purposes see 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; Uwe Puschner, "Grundzüge völkischer Rassenideologie" in Leube, ed., *Prähistorie und Nationalsozialismus*, 49-72; Niels Lösch, "Zur Biologisierung rechtsintellektuellen Denkens in der Weimarer Republik" in Wolfgang Bialas and Georg Iggers, eds., *Intellektuelle in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996), 333-50; Eva-Maria Ziege, *Mythische Kohärenz: Diskursanalyse des völkischen Antisemitismus* (Konstanz: UVK, 2002); Christian Jansen, "Völkische und rassistische Tendenzen in den deutschen Wissenschaften 1900-1940" in Jan-Erik Schulte, ed., *Die SS und die Wewelsburg* (Paderborn 2007), 141-60; Bernard Mees, "The Tradition of *Völkisch* Germanism" in Mees, *The Science of the Swastika* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), 11-31; for context see Axel Schildt, "Radikale Antworten von rechts auf die Kulturkrise der Jahrhundertwende: Zur Herausbildung und Entwicklung der Ideologie einer 'Neuen Rechten' in der Wilhelminischen Gesellschaft des Kaiserreichs" *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 4 (1995), 63-87; Uwe Lohalm, *Völkischer Radikalismus: Die Geschichte des Deutschvölkischen Schutz- und Trutz-Bundes, 1919-1923* (Hamburg: Leibnitz, 1970); Stefan Breuer, *Ordnungen der Ungleichheit - die deutsche Rechte im Widerstreit ihrer Ideen 1871-1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), 77-104; and Thomas Rohkrämer, "Playing with Fire: The Right in the Weimar Republic" in Rohkrämer, *A Single Communal Faith? The German Right from Conservatism to National Socialism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 142-87.

while *völkisch*-esoteric authors drew on anthroposophical, theosophical and ariososophical sources alike.¹¹⁰ The same individual might belong simultaneously to anthroposophist and ariosophist organizations, while also being involved in *völkisch* pursuits.

Swiss occultist Karl Heise, for instance, was a member of the ariososophical Guido-von-List-Gesellschaft and a leading figure in the Mazdaznan movement, an esoteric tendency that emphasized vegetarianism and Aryan supremacy; he joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1916. His publications drew heavily on Steiner's work, as well as on List's ariososophical writings, and in 1926 he collaborated with Alfred Rosenberg's Nazi periodical *Der Weltkampf*.¹¹¹ Heise's sometime protégé, the

¹¹⁰ Ariosophist texts in pan-German periodicals include Lanz von Liebenfels, "Das Morgenrot des Ariertums" *Alldeutsche Blätter* 15 (1905), 379-81, and Willibald Hentschel, "Ozeanien, Urheimat der weißen Rasse" *Alldeutsche Blätter* 19 (1909), 155-56, 171-73. On the personnel overlap between 'mainstream' *völkisch* and ariososophical organizations see Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung*, 70. Harald Grävell (1856-1932) is a prime example of a *völkisch* author who drew on a wide range of esoteric sources, publishing articles such as "Völkische Richtlinien für unsere Zukunft" and "Das Ariertum und seine Feinde" in Lanz von Liebenfels' journal *Ostara* in 1906 and 1908. In the latter article, appearing midway through Steiner's tenure as the head of German theosophy, Grävell "outlined a thoroughly theosophical conception of race and a programme for the restoration of Aryan authority in the world. His quoted occult sources were texts by Annie Besant, Blavatsky's successor as leader of the international Theosophical Society at London, and Rudolf Steiner, the Secretary General of its German branch in Berlin." (Goodrick-Clarke, *Occult Roots of Nazism*, 101) In particular Grävell cited Steiner's 1907 text *The Occult Significance of Blood*, "which reflected the theosophical interest in racist ideas." (ibid., 242) See also Harald Grävell, *Zarathustra und Christus* (Bad Schmiedeberg: Baumann, 1913), which cites Steiner's central works and combines anthroposophical and theosophical elements with a strong *Lebensreform* emphasis while praising the Mazdaznan movement. The details of Grävell's theosophically-derived racial theories displayed similarities with Steiner's teachings; see e.g. Grävell's main work *Aryavarta* (Leipzig: Akademischer Verlag, 1905), 69-75. Cf. Grävell, "Deutsche Kultur und französische Zivilisation im Kampf" *Theosophie* 5 (1915), 377-93. For background on Grävell see Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, eds., *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung'*, 908; Klatt, *Der Nachlaß von Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden*, 107; and Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung*, 94, 100-02, 173; Puschner describes Grävell as one of the "leading antisemitic-völkisch agitators" (55).

¹¹¹ In addition to the works examined below, see Heise, *Der katholische Ansturm wider den Okkultismus*, which discusses his relationship to ariosophy and to pan-German politics; Karl Heise, *Wie aus Traum und übersinnlichen Tatsachen Weltgeschichte wurde* (Zurich: Gral-Verlag, 1931); Karl Heise, *Die englisch-amerikanische Weltlüge* (Konstanz: Wölfing, 1919); Karl Heise, "Die Toten leben" *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* April 1920, 433-44. An extended example of Heise's synthesis of theosophical, anthroposophical, and ariososophical themes, 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. Guido 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 Ravagli, *Unter Hammer und Hakenkreuz*, 127-36 and 196-212.

Russian-German esotericist Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, followed a similarly intricate trajectory during much of the 1920s.¹¹² Schwartz-Bostunitsch was an anthroposophist, an ariosophist, a theosophist, 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.¹¹³ Prominent ariosophists, meanwhile, at times treated Steiner and other anthroposophists very positively.¹¹⁴ In the mid-1920s anthroposophist Hanns Rascher maintained contacts with Rudolf von Sebottendorf, the founder of the Thule Society, and explored the possibility of cooperation with him.¹¹⁵ A number of anthroposophists were also members of the nationalist paramilitary organization known as the Stahlhelm, as well as other Freikorps units.¹¹⁶

¹¹² I discuss Heise, Schwartz-Bostunitsch, and the Mazdaznan movement more extensively in chapter 6. On the personnel overlap among theosophy, anthroposophy, ariosophy and Mazdaznan cf. Linse, “Mazdaznan – die Rassenreligion vom arischen Friedensreich” in Schnurbein and Ulbricht, *Völkische Religion*, 285-86. For background on *völkisch* occultism in the Weimar period see Doering-Manteuffel, *Das Okkulte*, 193-228.

¹¹³ Another anthroposophist who eventually turned against Steiner was Max Seiling (1852-1928). Before his acrimonious break with Steiner, Seiling was for years both a dedicated anthroposophist and an active ariosophist. Seiling’s 1913 book *Theosophy and Christianity*, for which Steiner wrote an enthusiastic Afterword, praises Guido List’s foundational ariosophical work *Die Religion der Ario-Germanen* and calls List a “highly esteemed investigator of Aryanism”; see Max Seiling, *Theosophy and Christianity* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1913), 31. On Seiling see also Goodrick-Clarke, *Occult Roots of Nazism*, 43 and 55, and Klatt, *Der Nachlaß von Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden*, 257; for an anthroposophist view cf. Heyer, *Wie man gegen Rudolf Steiner kämpft*, 51-59. For a further example of this sort of theosophical-anthroposophical-ariosophical crossover see 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*.

¹¹⁴ See e.g. volume 9 (1918-1919) of the Leipzig-based ariosophical journal *Prana: Organ für angewandte Geisteswissenschaft*, edited by Johannes Balzli. The summer 1919 issue opens with a hagiographic obituary for Guido von List, followed immediately by an article by Steiner; later in the issue is an outspokenly positive review of Steiner’s book *Kernpunkte der sozialen Frage*, written by Balzli himself. The winter 1919 issue carries another extremely positive review by Balzli of a book by anthroposophist Ernst Uehli, praising its compatibility with List’s work. The 1918-19 issues additionally contain an ongoing series titled “Seelen-Kalender nach Dr. R. Steiner” adapted by Balzli from Steiner’s works. In contrast, Balzli is severely critical of theosophist Hermann Rudolph, the International Theosophical Brotherhood in Leipzig, and the Mazdaznan movement.

¹¹⁵ Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1573. Heise’s works also cite Sebottendorf approvingly. For further positive references to ariosophical works in anthroposophist publications see Richard Karutz, “Einbein und Einaug” *Das Goetheanum* July 5, 1925, 212-14.

¹¹⁶ 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

Early anthroposophy was thus in several ways a point of crossover and contact among various esoteric and *völkisch* streams, and the intense shared focus on a cluster of related themes from a range of shifting political and cultural perspectives could give rise to animosity and competition. Historian James Webb has argued that for all of the invective traded back and forth between anthroposophy and various 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’.”¹¹⁷ From the perspective of contemporary critics of the *völkisch* scene, Steiner’s movement could sometimes appear to be cut from the same cloth as the emerging Hitler movement.¹¹⁸

Perceptions such as these were formed in the diffuse and contentious context of *völkisch* religiosity within late Wilhelmine and Weimar culture.¹¹⁹ But more than

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/1475: 2674).

¹¹⁷ Webb, *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 and nation in the early decades of the twentieth century.

¹¹⁸ In a November 1922 essay on the rise of Hitler within the far-right Munich milieu, Carl Christian Bry compared Hitler to Steiner, Louis Haeusser, and other would-be saviors of Germany; see Carl Christian Bry, *Der Hitler-Putsch* (Nördlingen: Greno, 1987), 64: “Unter den ‘Politikern’ von heute ist Hitler allerdings eine einzigartige Erscheinung. Denn er gehört mehr in die Reihe der Steiner, Häusser, und anderer Wundertäter. Wenn nicht er selbst, seine Gefolgschaft sieht ihn sicherlich so an.” For Bry’s critical assessment of anthroposophy see Carl Christian Bry, *Verkappte Religionen* (Gotha: Klotz, 1925), 231-36.

¹¹⁹ On *völkisch* religion see 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; Rainer Lächele, “Protestantismus und völkische Religion im deutschen

spiritual tenets were at issue. The specific development and elaboration of Steiner's racial and ethnic doctrines within 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 such themes, including books, articles, pamphlets, and other 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, confusion, and upheaval, while others delineated a more general racial outlook or extended the anthroposophical version of the Aryan myth. Still others promoted a revival of Germanic mythology under esoteric auspices 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.

A number of early anthroposophist treatments of the 'race question' highlighted the connections between 'blood' and 'spirit' while disputing materialist

Kaiserreich" in Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, eds., *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung'*, 149-63; Stefanie von Schnurbein, "Die Suche nach einer 'arteigenen' Religion in 'germanisch-' und 'deutschgläubigen' Gruppen" in *ibid.*, 172-85; Justus Ulbricht, "Deutschchristliche und deutschgläubige Gruppen" in Kerbs and Reulecke, eds., *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen*, 499-511; Peter Walkenhorst, "Nationalismus als 'politische Religion'? Zur religiösen Dimension nationalistischer Ideologie im Kaiserreich" in Blaschke and Kuhleemann, eds., *Religion im Kaiserreich*, 503-29; Schnurbein, *Religion als Kulturkritik*; Cancik and Puschner, eds., *Antisemitismus, Paganismus, Völkische Religion*; Daniel Junker, *Gott in uns! Die Germanische Glaubens-Gemeinschaft - ein Beitrag zur Geschichte völkischer Religiosität in der Weimarer Republik* (Hamburg: Junker, 2002); Sylvia Siewert, *Germanische Religion und neugermanisches Heidentum: Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte germanischer Religionen und zum Problem der Kontinuitätsfrage aus religionswissenschaftlicher Sicht* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2002); Ekkehard Hieronimus, "Zur Religiosität der völkischen Bewegung" in Hubert Cancik, ed., *Religions- und Geistesgeschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1981), 159-75; Ekkehard Hieronimus, "Zur Frage nach dem Politischen bei völkisch-religiösen Gruppierungen" in Jacob Taubes, ed., *Religionstheorie und Politische Theologie* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1983), 316-21; 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; Uwe Puschner, "Weltanschauung und Religion – Religion und Weltanschauung. Ideologie und Formen völkischer Religion" *zeitenblicke* 5 (2006), 1-22.

conceptions of these terms and assigning the German spirit a special status as the herald of cosmic progress.¹²⁰ From an anthroposophical point of view, these notions played an important role in the context of Steiner's teachings on "race spirits" and "folk souls."¹²¹ An early book by anthroposophist Elise Wolfram, for example, portrayed Teutonic sagas as a narrative of racial evolution.¹²² Wolfram, a long-time theosophist and co-founder of the Anthroposophical Society, extolled the "Aryan race" as well as the "Germanic race" and presented ancient German and Nordic myths as inspired by "the genius of the race."¹²³ The Aryans, she explained, are the race of the intellect and the race that has united the physical with the spiritual, in sharp contrast to indigenous peoples, whom she characterized as "the debased remnants of the peoples of the past."¹²⁴ According to Wolfram, "Racial differences are

¹²⁰ Wilhelm Dörfler, "Geist oder Blut als Grundlage der neuen Gemeinschaft" *Der Pfad* December 1924, 21-23, argues for the importance of both spirit and blood, with the former taking priority; for Dörfler's views on "germanisches Blut" see Wilhelm Dörfler, "Die Erziehung des Germanen zum Kulturträger" *Der Pfad* December 1926, 6-12. On Dörfler's leading role in the anthroposophist youth movement see Friedrich Hiebel, *Time of Decision with Rudolf Steiner* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1989), 272. Cf. also Alfred Heidenreich, "Menschheit, Volk, Kirche" *Der Pfad* January 1925, 39-41, and Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Die Entdeckung des Menschen: Volk und Blut" in Rittelmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner als Führer zu neuem Christentum*. 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.

¹²¹ Steiner re-affirmed the doctrine of "race spirits" and "national spirits" or "folk spirits" at the end of his life; see his January 1925 text in Steiner, *Anthroposophische Leitsätze* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1972), 195; in English as Steiner, *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts*, 165. See also Steiner, *Destinies of Individuals and of Nations*, 58-65, 175-80; Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges*, 18-45; Lauer, *Die Volksseelen Europas*, 26-58.

¹²² 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 publishing house *Der Kommende Tag*: Elise Wolfram, *Die germanischen Heldensagen als Entwicklungsgeschichte der Rasse* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1922). I will cite the latter edition. On Wolfram's very active role within Steiner's movement from 1904 onward see Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Chronik*, 241, 258-63, 282, 331, 469. 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. In 1935 Wolfram was still head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Leipzig (BA R58/6193/2: 547).

¹²³ Wolfram, *Die germanischen Heldensagen*, 33, 62, passim. 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 Höchstentwicklung, dem arischen Menschen, zu bringen." (86-87)

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 27, 72, 109-110.

evolutionary differences, and every race has the religion that is best suited to its physical body.”¹²⁵ Other anthroposophist treatments of Germanic mythology pursued related themes.¹²⁶

Anthroposophical texts along these lines sometimes displayed a particular fascination with ancient Teutonic tribes as earlier embodiments of the German spirit.¹²⁷ Such texts may be seen as an esoteric variant on the revival of interest in Germanic pre-history, a phenomenon that extended well beyond the *völkisch* milieu.¹²⁸ After Steiner’s death, the major anthroposophist statement on the topic was Ernst

¹²⁵ Ibid., 140. Steiner held that the Germans were the “avant-garde” of the coming race of the future: Steiner, *Zur Geschichte und aus den Inhalten der ersten Abteilung der Esoterischen Schule*, 85.

¹²⁶ See among others Johannes Werner Klein, *Baldur und Christus* (Munich: Michael Verlag, 1923); Friedrich Doldinger, *Christus bei den Germanen* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1933); Alfred Heidenreich, “Der Nibelungen-Mythos, eine deutsche Schicksalskunde vom Sinn des Bösen” in Heidenreich, *Im Angesicht des Schicksals*, 70-85; Adolf Müller, “Der Heliand: Altgermanische Evangeliendichtung” *Die Christengemeinschaft* January 1940, 209-13.

¹²⁷ Cf. Karl Heyer, “Blut und Rasse” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* October 1932, 18-23; Martin Beheim-Schwarzbach, “Theodor Däubler und die Anthroposophie” *Anthroposophie* November 9, 1930, 357-59; Sigismund von Gleich, “Die Externsteine – Hauptheiligtum der alten Germanen” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* August 1933, 11-14; Berthold Georg, “Christentum und Germanentum” *Die Christengemeinschaft* September 1935, 180-85; Rudolf Meyer, *Die Weisheit der deutschen Volksmärchen* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1935).

¹²⁸ For background see Klaus von See, “Kulturkritik und Germanenforschung zwischen den Weltkriegen” *Historische Zeitschrift* 245 (1987), 343-62; Rainer Kipper, *Der Germanenmythos im deutschen Kaiserreich: Formen und Funktionen historischer Selbstthematisierung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002); 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 Faber and Schlesier, eds., *Die Restauration der Götter*, 241-57; Beatrix Günnewig, *Das Bild der Germanen und Britannier: Untersuchungen zur Sichtweise von fremden Völkern in antiker Literatur und moderner wissenschaftlicher Forschung* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1998), 177-228; Uwe Puschner, “Germanenideologie und völkische Weltanschauung” in Heinrich Beck, ed., *Zur Geschichte der Gleichung ‘germanisch-deutsch’* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 103-29; Heiko Steuer, “Das ‘völkisch’ Germanische in der deutschen Ur- und Frühgeschichtsforschung” in *ibid.*, 357-502; Wolfgang Emmerich, *Zur Kritik der Volkstumsideologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971); Klaus von See, *Deutsche Germanen-Ideologie* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1970); Volker Losemann, “Aspekte der nationalsozialistischen Germanenideologie” in Peter Kneissl and Volker Losemann, eds., *Alte Geschichte und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 256-84; Heinz Gollwitzer, “Zum politischen Germanismus des 19. Jahrhunderts” in Gollwitzer, *Weltpolitik und deutsche Geschichte*, 287-361; Bernhard Maier, *Die Religion der Germanen: Götter, Mythen, Weltbild* (Munich: Beck, 2003), 142-67; Ingo Wiwjorra, *Der Germanenmythos: Konstruktion einer Weltanschauung in der Altertumforschung des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006); Bernard Mees, “Hitler and Germanentum” *Journal of Contemporary History* 39 (2004), 255-70; Esther Gajek, “Germanenkunde und Nationalsozialismus” in Schmitz and Vollnhals, eds., *Völkische Bewegung - Konservative Revolution – Nationalsozialismus*, 325-56.

Uehli's 1926 book on Nordic-Germanic mythology.¹²⁹ Amidst lengthy passages about Thule and Atlantis and proclamations about the deep connection between “language and blood,” Uehli's book underscored the evolutionary differences between “the southern and northern peoples, the Semitic and Aryan peoples.”¹³⁰ Celebrating the special qualities of the northern “Aryan peoples,” Uehli emphasized the “*Blutsippenkräfte*” and “the blood of the Germanic peoples” which rendered them uniquely close to the natural world.¹³¹ While “the early Germans were a people of nature,” Uehli explained, “the Jews succumbed to Ahriman and could not recognize Christ in the flesh.”¹³²

Uehli's earlier book on the mystery of the Holy Grail displayed a similar focus on “Aryan” and “Nordic-Germanic” themes, while also contrasting “*Germanentum*” and “*Judentum*”.¹³³ According to Uehli, the task of the Christian era is to overcome the bonds of blood and strive toward Universal Humanity, but the Jews are the one

¹²⁹ Ernst Uehli, *Nordisch-Germanische Mythologie als Mysteriengeschichte* (Basel: Geering, 1926). The book is dedicated to the recently deceased Steiner. It was re-published in 1965 and again in 1984 by the anthroposophist Mellinger Verlag in Stuttgart. A heavily abridged English version is available as Ernst Uehli, *Norse Mythology and the Modern Human Being* (Fair Oaks: Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, 1999). For background on Uehli (1875-1959), one of the foremost figures in the history of the anthroposophical movement, see Hans Reinhart and Jakob Hugentobler, *Ernst Uehli: Leben und Gestaltung* (Bern: Francke, 1945), and cf. the translator's appendix to Steiner, *Mission of the Folk Souls*, 187-89. See also the extremely positive review of Uehli's book in *Anthroposophie* January 16, 1927, 10-11. For background on the Nordic myth in German culture see Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Der Mythos vom Norden: Studien zur romantischen Geschichtsprophetie* (Cologne 1961).

¹³⁰ Uehli, *Nordisch-Germanische Mythologie*, 138-39.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 40-41, 110, 218. Uehli further noted that the spiritual mission of the Jews had been completed two millennia earlier, and that “certain primitive peoples that are currently dying out” were “the decadent remnants of the Hyperboreans.” (129) In contrast, “die begabtesten und entwicklungsfähigsten Menschen bildeten den Keim für die arische Rasse.” (39)

¹³² *Ibid.*, 142. Helga Scheel-Geelmuyden, a leader of the Anthroposophical Society in Norway, referred to the Jews as those who “rejected the Son of the Virgin” and as “a scattered people that appears everywhere as the agent of the atomistic elements of our intellectual culture.” Helga Scheel-Geelmuyden, “Die Schöpfung des Menschen im Nordischen Mythos” *Die Drei* November 1925, 629.

¹³³ Ernst Uehli, *Eine neue Gralsuche* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1921); see e.g. 54-61 and the chapter “Der Gral als Blutsgeheimnis.” Uehli notes that he wrote the book in personal consultation with Steiner (275). During the Third Reich Uehli's works were distributed by the major anthroposophical publisher in Germany, the Verlag Emil Weises Buchhandlung in Dresden; see the 1937 report in BA R58/6187: 109. For background on Grail myths in *völkisch* contexts see Hermand, *Old Dreams of a New Reich*, 239-45, and Jost Hermand, “Gralsmotive um die Jahrhundertwende” in Hermand, *Von Mainz nach Weimar* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1969), 269-97.

people to refuse this evolutionary trend.¹³⁴ In a 1936 book on Atlantis, Uehli highlighted the spiritual facets of race and the divinely ordained nature of racial evolution, giving pride of place to the role of *Rassengeister* or spirits of the race.¹³⁵ Offering a cosmic explanation for racial differences, Uehli stressed that the origin of race lies in the spiritual realm and is expressed in the physical realm.¹³⁶ The leading character in this unfolding racial drama was the “Aryan race,” whose members were carefully selected by their cosmically appointed guide.¹³⁷ The theme of certain racial groups with exceptional biological and spiritual traits runs throughout the text, consistently contrasted to the large mass of people who do not share these superior

¹³⁴ Uehli writes of the Jews: “Dieses Volk stellt eine streng in sich geschlossene Blutsgruppe dar. Mit einer beispiellosen Konsequenz hält es an seiner Blutsberufung fest. Während alle anderen Völker früher oder später durch das Mittel der Fernehe zur Blutmischung übergehen und dadurch der Selbstberufung den Weg bahnen, wird hier mit allen Mitteln Blutsreinheit angestrebt.” (ibid. 141) This, says Uehli, explains why the Jews reject Christ. A proper spiritual conception of blood is the antidote to this “Wut der Juden” against Christ. (147)

¹³⁵ 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. Uehli’s narrative is based closely on Steiner’s model, and he cites Steiner’s racial works throughout the book. Describing a racial-spiritual selection process overseen by divine beings, beginning in Atlantis and continuing through subsequent stages of racial evolution, Uehli writes that “die Gliederung der atlantischen Menschheit in verschiedene Rassen” was a “Götterauftrag” (61); “Diese Rassengründung durch die atlantischen Mysterien war ein kosmisch begründetes und planvolles Unternehmen, auch in bezug auf die Auswahl und den Erdenort derer, welche an diesen Wanderzügen teilnehmen sollten.” (62-63) “Der Rassencharakter drückt sich in einer bestimmten physischen Organisation (z.B. der Pigmentierung der Haut), aber auch in urtümlichen seelischen Anlagen und Fähigkeiten aus.” (63) “Rudolf Steiners Rassengliederung ist kosmologisch begründet, von den Mysterienführern der Atlantis ins Werk gesetzt und an fünf Erdenorten verwirklicht.” (64) For further relevant passages see above all the chapters “Rassengründung durch die atlantischen Mysterien” and “Gründung der arischen Rasse durch den Manu” (60-77).

¹³⁶ Ibid. 69: “Das Ursprungsgeheimnis der fünf Grundrassen der Menschheit ist im Geistigen, nicht im Irdischen zu suchen, dann aber enthüllen sich bis in das Physische, bis in die Pigmentierung hinein, die Rätsel, welche die Rassen im Erdenraum darbieten. Läßt man den an geistiger Erkenntnis geschulten Blick über die Erdenkontinente und die Erdenorte, auf denen sich die fünf Rassen entwickelt haben, gleiten, so erscheint die Rassenlandkarte als grandioses, Staunen erweckendes Abbild kosmischen Kräftewirkens, welches die Menschheit formte. Rassengeschichte ist Mysteriengeschichte.”

¹³⁷ The early Aryans were “eine kleine Schar von Vorgesrittenen” under the guidance of Manu, who chose the best specimens to form this uniquely advanced racial group: “Mit diesen vorgeschrittenen Schülern unternahm der Manu eine neue Aufgabe von gewaltigem Ausmaß; er gründete mit dieser kleinen Schar die arische Rasse.” “Der Manu wurde durch die Begründung der arischen Rasse der große Führer zur Entwicklung der menschlichen Individualität.” (ibid., 70) Within this select population Manu gave special attention to an even smaller group whose task was to develop the intellect and who were “zum Führertum befähigt.” (72) Uehli concludes: “Der Keim zum Genie ist der arischen Rasse bereits in ihre atlantische Wiege gelegt worden.” (131)

traits, coupled with the distinction between racial and ethnic groups that “lead” and those that “follow” and the divergence between “more advanced” groups and those that have failed to evolve.¹³⁸

Following Steiner’s model, Uehli held that while other races had devolved and were incapable of further progress, the “Aryan race” or the “Caucasian race” continued to evolve higher.¹³⁹ The “red race” of the “American Indians” is “incapable of further evolution” and thus “dying out.” The “black race” is “unable to develop further,” hence its physiological and spiritual “symptoms of racial decline.”¹⁴⁰ In contrast, “the Aryan race, and with it the Germanic peoples, were born from spiritual foundations,” the basis of the “mission of the Germanic peoples in the cultural development of Europe.”¹⁴¹ Uehli’s Aryan arguments re-appear in many other works.¹⁴² One of the most interesting aspects of Uehli’s racial writings is his continual and largely positive engagement with other racial theorists of his time, above all *völkisch* author Herman Wirth.¹⁴³ 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

¹³⁸ See e.g. *ibid.*, 100-02, 114-16.

¹³⁹ See e.g. *ibid.*, 67: Because the Caucasian race was blessed with a cosmically ordained and specially advanced racial character, “dadurch wurde sie zur entwicklungsfähigsten, zur führenden Rasse.”

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 66. “Der heutige Neger ist kindlich, ist ein nachahmendes Wesen geblieben. Der heutige aussterbende Indianer ist in seiner äußeren Erscheinung verknöchert, im Denken greisenhaft. Beide Rassetypen bringen ihre Wesenspolarität in frappanter Weise zur Erscheinung.” The “gelbe Rasse, die Mongolen” have similarly remained “auf einer früheren Stufe” of evolution, while the “malayische Rasse” represents a racial type “mit träumerischer, passiver, in sich gekehrter Seelenlage und der Unmöglichkeit, sich auf eine höhere Stufe hinaufentwickeln zu können.” These racial characteristics are based on “kosmisch verankerten Entwicklungsgesetze.”

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 77. Reviewing the book, Wolfgang Moldenhauer praised Uehli’s depiction of “die Anfänge unserer Arischen Wurzelrasse”: Moldenhauer, “Ernst Uehlis Atlantis-Arbeit” *Das Goetheanum* August 9, 1936, 252-54.

¹⁴² See for example the extensive passages on racial evolution in Ernst Uehli, *Kultur und Kunst Ägyptens: Ein Isisgeheimnis* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1955). Although not published until after the war, the text was available in manuscript form before 1945; cf. Reinhart and Hugentobler, *Ernst Uehli*, 145.

¹⁴³ For background on Wirth (1885-1981) see Ulrich Hunger, *Die Runenkunde im Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1984), 180-203; Ingo Wiwjorra, “Herman Wirth – Ein gescheiterter Ideologe zwischen ‘Ahnenerbe’ und Atlantis” in Danckwortt, ed., *Historische Rassismusforschung*, 91-112; Mees, *Science of the Swastika*, 135-66, 217-58.

1928 volume that posited Atlantis as the origin of the Aryan race, as Steiner had.¹⁴⁴

Uehli frequently referred to Wirth's work, portraying it as an "ample material confirmation of Dr. Steiner's anthroposophical research on Atlantis."¹⁴⁵ At times Uehli also criticized Wirth's approach for failing to take anthroposophist premises into account, and for giving insufficient attention to the spiritual aspects of Aryan history.¹⁴⁶

Other anthroposophist writers discussed Wirth's ideas as well.¹⁴⁷ Some *völkisch* works, meanwhile, cited Uehli's writings approvingly.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Herman Wirth, *Der Aufgang der Menschheit: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Religion, Symbolik und Schrift der atlantisch-nordischen Rasse* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1928). Wirth does not seem to have had an especially positive impression of Steiner's work; see the somewhat oblique references on pages 4 and 9 in his Introduction.

¹⁴⁵ Ernst Uehli, "Atlantis-Forschung II" *Das Goetheanum* May 4, 1930, 141.

¹⁴⁶ Uehli adopted a significantly more critical perspective on Wirth in *Atlantis und das Rätsel der Eiszeitkunst*. Many of his references to Wirth are nevertheless positive. See e.g. Ernst Uehli, "Atlantis-Forschung" *Das Goetheanum* April 27, 1930, 132-34; Uehli, "Die heilige Urschrift der Menschheit" *Das Goetheanum* July 16, 1933, 226-29 (Uehli's discussion of "Ario-Germanentum" on 227 is particularly noteworthy); Uehli, "Ein Beitrag zu den Mysterien des Zeichens" *Das Goetheanum* July 23, 1933, 233-35; Uehli, "Eiszeitkunst II" *Das Goetheanum* November 12, 1933, 363. The latter article also discusses Oswald Menghin's antisemitic work *Geist und Blut* (Vienna 1933), giving it a basically positive evaluation while averring that Menghin's analysis could have gone further and avoided unnecessary errors if Menghin had availed himself of Steiner's insights into Atlantis and racial evolution. See also the positive references to Menghin's work by anthroposophists Gottfried Richter, *Die Germanen als Wegbahner eines kosmischen Christentums* (Breslau: Ullrich, 1936), 61-62, and Arnold Wadler, *Germanische Urzeit: Quellen zur Vorgeschichte der deutschen Sprache* (Basel: Geering, 1936), 6-7, 17. Menghin was active in Austrian Nazi circles throughout the 1930s; after the annexation in 1938 he was named Minister of Education and oversaw the "cleansing" of the University of Vienna.

¹⁴⁷ Examples include Richard Karutz, "Zur Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 3, 1932, 3-6; Arnold Wadler, "Die geistige Geburt Europas" *Das Goetheanum* August 30, 1936, 274-76; Gerhard Hardorp, "Zu Herman Wirths 'Aufgang der Menschheit'" *Die Christengemeinschaft* February 1931, 338-41; Cornelia Los, "Jugenderinnerungen der Menschheit" *Die Christengemeinschaft* November 1932, 242-43; and Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Atlantische Urweissagung" *Die Christengemeinschaft* December 1933, 257-64, which lauds Wirth and calls for a synthesis of Wirth's work with Steiner's. Another very positive discussion of Wirth's work appears in anthroposophist Georg Halbe's article "Versuch zur Deutung germanischer Symbole" *Odal* September 1935, 216-25. From a somewhat more critical viewpoint see Sigismund von Gleich, "Die Menschheit vor 15000 Jahren" *Anthroposophie* July 19, 1931, 229-30. Gleich scolds Wirth's *Aufgang der Menschheit* for an excessively *völkisch* bent and charges Wirth with "Rassen-Voreingenommenheit," but also has considerable praise for the book. Gleich refers positively and unproblematically to "der arisch-germanischen Rasse" (229) and surveys anthroposophist teachings on Atlantis in order to complement, expand, and amend Wirth's account. Drawing in part on Uehli's work, Richter, *Die Germanen als Wegbahner eines kosmischen Christentums*, 22-24 and 63-66, offers a generally positive appraisal of Wirth's claims, and says that if science were to embrace anthroposophy, it would confirm Wirth's research. See also Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Deutschum* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1934), 37-53.

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, Rudolf John Gorsleben, *Hoch-Zeit der Menschheit* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1930), 125, citing Uehli's *Nordisch-Germanische Mythologie* positively alongside Wirth's *Aufgang der*

Arguments such as Wolfram's and Uehli's were not unusual in early anthroposophist literature. Anthroposophist Sigismund von Gleich published a major work on Atlantis the same year as Uehli's book, drawing on esoteric authors such as Blavatsky and Schuré and contemporary racial theorists like Wirth, Menghin, Kossinna, Ripley, and Günther.¹⁴⁹ Gleich held that "lower races" were "degenerated" versions of the human form, standing evolutionarily between apes and full humans, while the most advanced racial group was "Aryan-Nordic mankind."¹⁵⁰ Relying primarily on Steiner's texts, Gleich explored "the cosmic order in the arrangement of the races."¹⁵¹ He explained that the "Aryan race," which he also termed "the white race," the "Nordic race," the "Nordic-Aryan Europeans," the "Caucasian-Indo-Germanic race," and "Aryan-Indo-Germanic mankind," was the most highly developed of a series of races that arose on Atlantis. In contrast to the noble Aryans stood the Turanians, a dark Asiatic race:

Menschheit. According to Hieronimus, "Von der Germanen-Forschung zum Germanen-Glauben," 225, Gorsleben was partly influenced by Steiner. See also the positive references to Gorsleben in *Das Goetheanum* October 14, 1934, as well as Johannes Hohlenberg, "Runenweisheit" *Das Goetheanum* March 23, 1930. Gorsleben (1883-1930) was an ariosophically inclined rune mystic and founder of the *Edda-Gesellschaft*; he published the journal *Deutsche Freiheit: Monatsschrift für Arische Gottes- und Welterkenntnis*.

¹⁴⁹ Sigismund von Gleich, *Der Mensch der Eiszeit und Atlantis* (Stuttgart: Waldorf-Verlag, 1936). The book has been re-published several times by anthroposophist presses, most recently in 1990. For references to race theorists William Z. Ripley and Hans F.K. Günther see e.g. 203; references to Wirth can be found at 103, 123-4, 202-203, and references to Menghin at 12, 101-102, 113-114, 128-141, 145, 156, 201. Gleich cites Steiner's *Unsere atlantischen Vorfahren* and *Mission der Volksseelen* throughout the book, calling the latter "fundamental for all knowledge of peoples and races" (145). For a similar anthroposophist account see Fred Poeppig, *Das Zeitalter der Atlantis und die Eiszeit* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1962), particularly the chapter on "Atlantische Rassengründungen" (52-59) and the section "Ur-Semiten und Arier" (68-71).

¹⁵⁰ 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. For a biographical portrait see Stefan Leber, "Sigismund von Gleich" in von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 226-27.

¹⁵¹ Gleich, *Der Mensch der Eiszeit und Atlantis*, 192. The chapter titled "The evolutionary high point and decline of the Atlanteans: The Atlantean primeval era of the red, yellow and white race" begins by explaining that the arrangement of the races reflects the "heavenly hierarchies" (60).

During the fourth Atlantean epoch, as souls that were filled with impure urges immersed themselves deeper into the body, into the nerve system and the blood, there arose among the Turanians an occult and sensuous-egoistic colored intellectuality, a seductive magical-kabbalistic kind of reasoning, that leads toward an impure and greedy addiction to knowledge and a materialistic and egoistic exploitation of stolen insights. One was to feel that all spiritual truth, when coveted and pilfered by these sorts of souls in an impure way, is falsified into base and materialistically colored occultism, as if killed by a poisonous scorpion sting.¹⁵²

Unlike the Aryans, the fate of the Turanians was evolutionary doom. “The largest part of this race perished from its own decadence,” while “the Aryan root race arose out of the best of the northern Atlanteans.”¹⁵³ Gleich reported that the early white races were “at the mercy of violent onslaughts by other, colored races,” identifying these “colored races” with the Turanians and Africans.¹⁵⁴ The Turanians continue today within “the Semitic element” and remain the spiritual counter-pole to the Aryans.¹⁵⁵ But “the best members of the white race” carry a spiritual consciousness “which enables humankind to become a free spiritual being.”¹⁵⁶ The virtues of the Aryans are the result of a rigorous spiritual-racial selection process overseen by esoteric Initiates:

¹⁵² *ibid.* 71. Gleich then compares the Turanians to vampires (72) and declares them responsible for Bolshevism (77). He continues: “Thus under the paradisiacal and innocent Hyperborean impulses, the first white race of humankind was formed in north Atlantis as a counter-pole to the south Atlantean black race. Just as the life processes and reproductive processes cooked inside the bodies of the Atlantean-Lemurian Indo-Ethiopians, synchronized with the rampant vegetation of the tropics and the Vulcan earth-fire powers, so the Atlantean-Hyperborean north Atlanteans in cold mist regions developed the cool sensory and thinking life of the mind.” (81)

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 129-30. Gleich portrays the racial selection process in some detail: “Beim Hereinbrechen der atlantischen Katastrophen sind die brauchbaren Teile der Nordatlantier aus ihren Wohnsitzen bei Irland-England-Skandinavien auf nördlichen Wegen nach dem Osten gerettet worden, damit aus ihnen die Keime der arischen Wurzelrasse mit ihren verschiedenen Verzweigungen später gebildet würden. Auf diesen Wanderzügen blieben auf verschiedenen Zwischenstationen verschiedene weniger fortbildungsfähige Bevölkerungsgruppen stehen, die aber dennoch viel höher standen als die übrigen in tiefe Dekadenz gesunkenen Reste der verschiedenen Atlanterrassen.” (135)

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 113. “The pre-Aryan Dravidians of southern India are decadent remnants of the proto-Indo-Ethiopians” (117), while aboriginal peoples represent “the lowest racial remnants” of long-superseded eras of evolution (170).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 153-57. Gleich contrasts the “natural dispositions” of “the peoples of the northern or Aryan current” to “the southern Atlantean Hamitic-Turanian-Semitic current” (157).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

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 – in place of the old vision – 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. [...] 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.¹⁵⁷

In today's world, according to Gleich, cultural differences are based on racial and ethnic differences: "In the post-Atlantean epochs, human souls develop diverse cultures on the basis of different racial and ethnic forces." Race itself is not merely physical, but encompasses spirit, soul, and body, the three elements that yield "the specific racial traits" of each human group.¹⁵⁸ Dark skin, for example, is due to spiritual failure and demonic forces:

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 Lucifer's influence the astral body with its desires was corrupted and made more powerful than the divine spark, which was weakened and darkened.¹⁵⁹

In vivid contrast, Gleich describes the racial origins of the Aryans:

The two white-skinned races of Atlantis, the fifth and the sixth races, who populated the northern and southern European parts of Atlantis as pre-Aryan and pre-Caucasian Atlanteans, did not have a long way to travel from their European-Atlantean home to the Caucasus, the formative center of the Eurasian-Caucasian race. There the Greeks experienced the Zeus-Jupiter-God especially intensely, who forged the bold Promethean power of thought in the rocky pinnacle of the head.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 88-89.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 163-64.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 171. Gleich also delineated both "races of blood" and "races of soil," echoing the conceptual pairing of blood and soil popularized by Nazi racial theorist Walther Darré; see e.g. 173 on "Blutsrassen" and "Bodenrassen." The interplay of blood-forces and soil-forces runs throughout Gleich's account of racial development.

The outstanding sensory talents and the spiritual thinking power of the North Atlanteans reached perfection in their descendents, the Aryan-Caucasian peoples, under the Jupiter forces radiating from the Caucasus. The sensory and aesthetic gifts of the Greeks, the people of philosophers and artists, made them the noblest branch of Zeus-Jupiter humankind in antiquity.¹⁶⁰

Under the heading “The harmonious cosmic purpose of the earth” Gleich summed up his message in anthroposophical vocabulary:

In the center of the world lies the light-ether zone of Aryan Jupiter-mankind, whose constitution in many respects offers the purest sensory reflection of the original image of the human form, solar and life-etheric, and who is therefore the most fit for the further development of the ‘I’ through the spiritual power of thought.¹⁶¹

Gleich’s anthroposophist contemporaries published a number of similar works on race.¹⁶² Some of these centered on the “Aryan root-race” or on the “decadent” peoples belonging to “the colored racial groups of the present day.”¹⁶³ Others analyzed

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 174. The darker-skinned southerly racial groups, however, including “the Semites” and “the Indo-Ethiopians,” are “naturally predisposed” toward “hot blood, because the prevailing forces in their constitution are the cooking warmth-etheric forces of the glandular system, the blood, and the reproductive system.” (195)

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 195. Gleich explored these themes further in a variety of other publications; see above all Sigismund von Gleich, *Marksteine der Kulturgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Waldorf-Verlag, 1938); Gleich, *Die Menschwerdung des Weltenwortes*, in particular the introductory section titled “Kosmische Eugenetik” (9-11); and Gleich, *Geisteswissenschaft, Kunstoffenbarung und religiöse Lebensanschauung in ihrer Dreieinheit philosophisch-anthroposophisch entwickelt aus dem Menschenwesen und Ideenkosmos: Mit einer Einleitung über die Schöpfung der Anthroposophie in Rudolf Steiners Geistesentwicklung* (Stuttgart: Mellinger, 1971; photomechanical reproduction of the 1937 edition). Gleich’s post-war works discuss “the Aryan root race” as well; see e.g. Gleich, *Siebentausend Jahre Urgeschichte der Menschheit* (Stuttgart: Mellinger, 1987, originally published 1950).

¹⁶² For representative examples see Harry Köhler, “Wiederholte Erdenleben und Karma im Bewusstsein einzelner Völker” *Das Goetheanum* April 6, 1930, 109-10, and Harry Köhler, “Menschheits-Entwicklung und Völkerschicksale im Spiegel der Historie” *Das Goetheanum* August 21, 1932, 273-74. ‘Harry Köhler’ was a pseudonym for Baroness Harriet von Vacano (1862-1949), a member of Steiner’s Esoteric School and head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Konstanz who was also active in the social threefolding movement.

¹⁶³ Wolfgang Moldenhauer, “Der Mensch vor und neben den grossen Kulturen” *Das Goetheanum* February 13, 1938, 51-52, explains that anthroposophical race thinking will help to understand the “farbigen Rassenstämme unserer Gegenwart.” (51) For his views on “die arische Wurzelrasse” see Moldenhauer, “Menschheitsgruppen vor und neben den grossen Kulturen” *Das Goetheanum* June 7, 1931, 180-81; on “Negroes,” the “Malayan race,” and the “Semitic” peoples see Moldenhauer, “Die Wanderungs-Atlantier und das Gesetz des Manu” *Das Goetheanum* June 26, 1938, 203-05. See also Moldenhauer, “Von der anthropologisch orientierten Völkerkunde zum anthroposophischen Erkennen der Volksseelen” in Wachsmuth, ed., *Gäa-Sophia* vol. III: *Völkerkunde*, 86-95.

the perils of “Asian spiritual life” and warned that Russian Communism was preparing the souls of Eastern Europe to be inundated by Chinese collectivism.¹⁶⁴ But the most prolific anthroposophist race theorist during the interwar period was Richard Karutz.¹⁶⁵ 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. Karutz forcefully rejected “materialist” approaches to anthropology as incapable of grasping the meaning of race.¹⁶⁶ Painting a complex panorama of “lower races” and “higher races,” or “early races” and “later races,” Karutz depicted Europeans as the highest racial group while characterizing non-European peoples as “debased” and “decadent.”¹⁶⁷

Following Steiner, Karutz portrayed the various racial groups as rungs on the ladder of spiritual progress, with white people at the top.¹⁶⁸ Racial traits, according to

¹⁶⁴ Valentin Tomberg, “Asiatisches Geistesleben” *Anthroposophie* January 18, 1931, 17-19; Tomberg, “Das Chinesentum und der europäische Osten” *Anthroposophie* February 15, 1931, 49-51; Tomberg, “Mongolentum in Osteuropa” *Anthroposophie* February 22, 1931, 57-59; Tomberg, “Das Antichristentum im europäischen Osten” *Anthroposophie* June 7, 1931, 177-79.

¹⁶⁵ For biographical background on Karutz (1867-1945) see Matthias Karutz, “Richard Karutz” in von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 348-49, and Peter Selg, *Anthroposophische Ärzte: Lebens- und Arbeitswege im 20. Jahrhundert* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 2000), 88-89. 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). Both Karutz and Uehli were considered leading anthroposophist authorities on racial questions; see for example the extensive references to both authors in Guenther Wachsmuth, *Mysterien- und Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit* (Dresden: Emil Weise, 1938).

¹⁶⁶ See Richard Karutz, *Von Goethe zur Völkerkunde der Zukunft* (Stuttgart: Ernst Surkamp, 1929), 61, 66, 69, 81, 103; according to Karutz, an anthroposophical ethnology is based on an “Untersuchung des Menschen innerhalb einer völkischen Gemeinschaft, in der Bindung durch Rasse, Volk, Gesellschaft, Beruf, Gewerbe, usw.” (16) Karutz ridiculed “materialist” versions of anthropology because they “place today’s Australian, American Indian, and Negroid savage tribes at the same level as the ancient Celts and Teutons” (126).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 115, 125, 127; Karutz also describes “die außereuropäischen Völker” as “derjenige Teil der Menschheit, der dem Rassenbildungsprozeß erlegen ist, während die europäischen ihn überwunden haben” (118); non-Europeans are “diejenigen Menschen, die den äußeren kosmischen Einflüssen keine inneren metamorphosierten kosmischen Kräfte entgegenzusetzen vermochten.” (119) Cf. 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.

¹⁶⁸ Karutz, *Von Goethe zur Völkerkunde der Zukunft*, 120-22.

Karutz, were both “physiological features” and “spiritual facts”; light skin indicates spiritual development and dark skin indicates 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.¹⁶⁹

Karutz took a particular interest in Africans, whose impoverished souls could potentially be led toward higher development by empathetic and spiritually aware Europeans.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, Karutz argued that cultural factors were gradually replacing racial factors as spiritual evolution progressed.¹⁷¹

Like other anthroposophists, Karutz engaged with the work of a range of contemporary racial thinkers, including several Nazi race theorists.¹⁷² His most extensive discussions addressed central themes of the *völkisch* movement, offering

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 117: “In der Rassenfarbe wirkt dauernder Widerstreit zwischen äußerem geistigen Licht und innerem geistigen Licht. Der Farbige ist – so sehr die materialistische mechanistische Weltanschauung sich dagegen wehren und darüber höhnen mag – farbig, weil seine seelisch-geistige Struktur zu schwach gegenüber der körperlichen ist.” His fellow anthroposophists viewed Karutz’ claims as non-racist, indeed as the antidote to racism. In 1937 anthroposophist Ludwig Paul (Paul Oldendorff) praised Karutz’ *Von Goethe zur Völkerkunde der Zukunft* as “echte Wissenschaft” in contrast to the excessively intellectualistic and materialistic “sturen Rassismus” of the day; cf. Ludwig Paul, *Krankheit und Heilung des Abendlandes* (Basel: Zbinden & Hügin, 1937), 178.

¹⁷⁰ Richard Karutz, *Die afrikanische Seele: Erster Versuch einer afrikanischen Geistesgeschichte* (Basel: Geering, 1938). Karutz partly blames the “Semiten” for the spiritual impoverishment of Africa (330). His argument centers on the “Verhältnis der leiblichen Blut- und Erbanlage zur seelischen Artung.” (11) “Die Wissenschaft muss ihr Unrecht am Geiste wieder gutmachen. Sie muss einsehen, dass sie die morphologischen und biologischen Erscheinungen – Formen, Leben, Entwicklung, Vererbung, Rassen, Völker – nicht vom toten Stoffe aus erklären kann, and dass für die Kulturen das Gleiche gilt.” (13) He explains that the human being is “ein rasslich unterschiedlicher, in der Rasse fest vererblicher Typus” (14). See also Richard Karutz, *Des schwarzen Menschen Märchenweisheit* (Stuttgart: Orient-Occident Verlag, 1929); Guenther Wachsmuth, “Afrika als Organ der Erde: Kindheitsstadien der Menschheit” in Wachsmuth, ed., *Gää-Sophia* vol. III: *Völkerkunde*, 39-58; Ernst von Hippel, “Eindrücke aus Afrika” *Die Christengemeinschaft* June 1938, 75-78; and Ernst von Hippel, *Afrika als Erlebnis des Menschen* (Breslau: Ullrich, 1938).

¹⁷¹ Karutz, *Von Goethe zur Völkerkunde der Zukunft*, 122: “Des weiteren erklärt sich aus dem Geistig-Wesenhaften von Rasse und Mensch das Verhältnis zwischen Rasse und Kultur, insofern in der Weltgeschichte die Bedeutung der ersteren sinkt und der letzteren steigt, ‘der Kulturbegriff den Rassenbegriff ablöst’ nach einem Worte Rudolf Steiners.” In this process, however, the “earlier races” are destined to die out, because “die heute lebenden sogenannten Naturvölker nur Entartung früherer Zustände darstellen.” (127)

¹⁷² I examine Karutz’s appraisal of the works of Hans F. K. Günther and R. Walther Darré in chapter 4.

both praise and criticism, and insisting above all on the spiritual basis of race.¹⁷³ In 1932 Karutz wrote:

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.¹⁷⁴

Thus *völkisch* figures, in Karutz's view, were distracted by the merely political surface of Germany's crisis and did not fully appreciate its spiritual roots. He also criticized the hope of some *völkisch* thinkers of replacing Christ with Wotan. But Steiner's anthroposophy provided the synthesis that would bring all of these strands together.¹⁷⁵ Under the benevolent guidance of anthroposophical ideals, the promising seeds within *völkisch* circles could be brought to fruition.

Karutz's major statement on racial and national themes before the advent of the Nazi regime was the prodigious series of "lectures on moral ethnology" he published from 1930 onward, culminating in a volume on "Racial Questions" in 1934.

¹⁷³ See e.g. Karutz, "Zur Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 3, 1932, 4: "Sippe ist Blutszusammenhang erst indem sie Geistzusammenhang ist." In a related article four months earlier, Karutz discussed *völkisch* author August Winnig's 1928 book *Das Reich als Republik*, arguing that Steiner already exemplified what Winnig calls for; see Richard Karutz, "Zur Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* August 23, 1931, 268-70. Karutz then turned to Winnig's next book, *Vom Proletariat zum Arbeitertum* (1930), commenting: "Wie bei Darré, so hier bei Winnig ein Erkennen und Überwindenwollen des Materialismus, ein Erkennen übersinnlicher führender Mächte, ein Ahnen des Volkgeistes, eine Verständigungsmöglichkeit mit der Geisteswissenschaft" (270), if only Winnig and Darré could make the leap from abstract and merely biological notions to the true spiritual realities revealed by anthroposophy.

¹⁷⁴ Karutz, "Zur Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 3, 1932, 4: "In den Menschen völkischer Kreise liegt viel gute Saat für eine geistige Zukunft, es ist als stiege in ihnen die altgermanische Spiritualität richtig verwandelt wieder hoch, aber die Not der Heimat bannt ihren Blick auf den politischen Vordergrund, verkrampft sie mit den äusseren Erscheinungen [...]" Due to the "Schäden der materialistischen Wissenschaft," *völkisch* thinkers are preoccupied with "das Vergangenheitsideal der Blutsippe" instead of "das Zukunftsideal des freien Einzelmenschen" and therefore do not realize the full potential of the German spirit.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 5-6. Much of the article is a review of Nordacist Bernhard Kummer's 1927 book *Midgards Untergang*. For background on Kummer and his Nazi career see Mees, *Science of the Swastika*, 121-28; Hans-Jürgen Luthhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland 1920-1940* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1971), 50-51; Bernard Mees, "The Politics of Nordic Studies in the German-Speaking Countries, 1926-45" in Geraldine Barnes and Margaret Clunies Ross, eds., *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society* (Sydney: Centre for Medieval Studies, 2000), 316-26.

These lectures were published with the imprimatur of the official anthroposophical leadership under the auspices of the *Freie Hochschule für Geisteswissenschaft* at the Goetheanum in Dornach.¹⁷⁶ Calling his approach “ethno-anthroposophy” and citing Steiner throughout, Karutz declared that “today’s ethnology must once again acknowledge the idea of degeneration.”¹⁷⁷ Emphasizing the profound spiritual and racial differences between Europeans and “early peoples,” he explained that the fate of many non-European peoples was extinction rather than evolution.¹⁷⁸ The “colored peoples” were unable to participate in the development of culture and civilization because of their “spiritual-bodily constitution” and were destined to stagnate or die out. This seeming tragedy served a higher spiritual purpose; racial evolution, for

¹⁷⁶ 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.

¹⁷⁷ Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 5, “Vom Werden und vom Wege der Völkerkunde” (1930), 22: “Die Völkerkunde muß heute wieder den Entartungsgedanken bekennen.”

¹⁷⁸ Following Steiner’s narrative of racial evolution, centered on the migrations out of Atlantis and the contrast between Aryan and non-Aryan populations, Karutz explained the category of ‘early peoples’ as follows: “Unter frühen Völkern verstehe ich diejenigen, die vor dem großen europäisch-asiatischen, dem arischen Strome der Nachatlantier nach Indien, aus Lemurien, Atlantis, Nachatlantis ausgezogen sind: die Zwergvölker, die amerikanischen, die turanischen, die negroiden, die malayischen, die mongolischen, die chinesischen Völker, die europäischen Völker der Alt- und der frühen Jungsteinzeit; und unter späteren Völkern die Inder, Perser, die Europäer der späten Jungsteinzeit. Alle heutigen Völker versteht man dabei natürlich nur als Reste.” (ibid., 3) In the seventh installment of the *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde*, titled “Die Kultur” (1930), Karutz referred to “die frühen Völker” as “verkrüppelte Aeste” on the “Stammbaum” of human evolution, “die nach kurzem Dasein ihre weitere Entwicklung eingestellt haben.” (21) Today the “farbigen Völker” are spiritually and culturally “stehengeblieben und entartet, weil die Seele des Farbigen den Ich-Impuls nicht aufgenommen hat und das Eigentliche, Innerste des Mysterienwesens, die Wandlung der Seele nicht vollziehen kann.” (34) According to Karutz, the ‘I’ or true individuality has fully developed “bisher nur in den europäischen Rassen”; “Vom Anfang seiner Rassenbildung an hat der europäische Mensch zu seinem Ich anders gestanden als die farbigen Menschen [...] Der Farbige hat es niemals in dem gleichen Maße getan – er wäre sonst eben nicht farbig.” Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 13, “Herkunft und Wesenheit des Menschen” (1931), 41.

Karutz, was properly understood as a process of growth for individual souls, extending over multiple incarnations.¹⁷⁹

Karutz focused much of his attention on the spiritually degrading impact of non-European racial, ethnic, and cultural influences on contemporary Germany. Noting the increased presence of “Mongoloid, Egyptoid, Negroid and Australoid types” on European streets, he characterized such 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*.¹⁸⁰ Karutz warned against ‘Negro’ influences in particular, which cause Europeans to “sink lower to an earlier stage of development of the soul.”¹⁸¹ To combat

¹⁷⁹ Karutz, “Die Kultur,” 21: “Die kulturgeschichtlichen Epochen sind Ausdruck einer ununterbrochenen Wandlung des Bewußtseins. Man kann fragen, warum an ihr die farbigen Völker nicht teilnehmen, warum Völker aussterben: die geistig-leibliche Konstitution der Menschen ist daran Schuld [...] Die hier zweifellos vorhandene Tragik und Grausamkeit des Schicksals farbiger Völker und Menschen löst sich auf, wenn man sich sagt, daß es sich nicht um Völker, sondern um Seelen handelt, daß die Seelen wiederkehren, daß sie durch die Erlebnisse in der farbigen Rasse hindurchmüssen, daß sie auf ihre nächste Inkarnation, ihr nächstes Erdenleben sich vorbereiten müssen und getröstet dürfen.” For context on such ideas see Urs Bitterli, *Die “Wilden” und die “Zivilisierten”: Grundzüge einer Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte der europäisch-überseeischen Begegnung* (Munich: Beck, 2004).

¹⁸⁰ Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 3, “Die frühen Völker und wir” (1930), 27: “Wie eine Bestätigung dieses ganzen Vorganges sehen uns die mongoloiden, aegyptoiden, negroiden, australoiden Typen an, denen wir uns auf der Straße begegnen; sie sind keine Rassenmischungen, keine Nachlässigkeiten im äusseren Rassenkampf, sie sind Wiederverkörperungen ich-schwacher Seelen, in denen die kosmischen Bildekkräfte und Seelenkräfte, die früher einmal, in der Vor-Ichepoche der menschlichen Entwicklung die Rassen aufgebaut haben, wieder hochkommen und über die individualisierenden, physiognomie-bildenden Ich-Kräfte triumphieren.” He continues: “So sehen wir unsere mitteleuropäische Gegenwart von Strebungen beherrscht, die das Ich abdämmern [...] Daß hier zielsichere Mächte an einem Zerstörungswerke arbeiten, ist nur allzuklar.” This is a campaign directed against “dem mitteleuropäischen Geiste” and led in part by “Amerika,” designed to bring “primitive Bewußtseinsinhalte herüber, die unserer Stufe fremd, widersetzlich, schädlich sind.”

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 21. Karutz provided considerable detail on this point: “Negerrhythmus und Europäerrhythmus gehören so wenig zusammen wie Nacht und Tag [...] Der Europäer, der den Negerrhythmus annimmt, müßte folgerichtig zur Weltanschauung des Negers zurückkehren, denn der Rhythmus ist in Weltzusammenhängen begründet. Und in der Tat, dahin geht die Richtung des Gegenwartslebens, zurück zur Gruppenseelenhaftigkeit des Primitiven, zur Unbewußtheit, zur Triebhaftigkeit.” (19) “Der Neger ist also der Nachahmer und verharrt im Grunde in seinem unbewußten Rhythmus, der Arier ist der Schöpferische, der fremde primitive Rhythmen mit seinem Ich durchkrafet und in ein Neues verwandelt. Deutlicher können Rassenunterschiede nicht gezeichnet werden.” (20) Karutz also offered a karmic explanation for slavery: “Wir finden bei den Negern,” he wrote, a “Schuld- und Sühneverhältnis in der Wiedergeburtstatsache: Vergehen in einem früheren Erdenleben werden in dem jetzigen durch Verlust der Freiheit, Fall in die Sklaverei etc. bestraft.” Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 15, “Schicksal” (1931), 51.

such tendencies, Karutz called for an “inner racial struggle” (*innerer Rassenkampf*), declaring that a correct understanding of race “must provide the weapons for this inner racial struggle.”¹⁸² And anthroposophy, in turn, supplied the basis for a proper understanding of race.¹⁸³ For Karutz, it is “the spirit of the race which has molded the physical form of the race with cosmic and earthly spiritual forces.”¹⁸⁴ When understood rightly, “blood and spirit are identical,” hence “the community of blood is the community of spirit.”¹⁸⁵ By 1933, Karutz openly greeted the rise of Nazism as the fulfillment of this racial-spiritual program.¹⁸⁶

Anthroposophists were not always of one mind in delineating the relationship between physical and spiritual aspects of race. Some argued that straightforwardly racist approaches, such as Gobineau’s works or fashionable ‘Nordic’ theories, were too materialist and failed to capture the true spiritual essence underlying race.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Karutz, “Die frühen Völker und wir,” 28.

¹⁸³ Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 42, “Wirtschaft” (1934), 5. Historian of anthropology George Stocking describes the background to this “romantic conception of race” built on “ideas of racial ‘essence,’ of racial ‘genius,’ of racial ‘soul,’ of race as a supraindividual organic identity.” Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 194.

¹⁸⁴ Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 9, “Religion” (1931), 25. “Der wahre Ahnherr des in den Völkern der Völkerkunde angetroffenen Menschen ist der Rassegeist.” (26) The “considerable difference” between Westerners and Easterners is both spiritual in origin and “grounded in physiology.” Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 34, “Der Schicksalsweg der Mysterien” (1933), 3.

¹⁸⁵ Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 38, “Gesellschaftliches Leben” (1934), 12.

¹⁸⁶ I discuss Karutz’s embrace of Nazism in chapters 4 and 5. Writing in 1930, Karutz posed a choice between Fascism and Bolshevism, invoking Steiner’s concept of the spirit of the nation: “Auf späteren Stufen folgt das Individuum dem Volksgeist oder tut es nicht. Im ersteren Falle wird es mit der ganzen Volksmasse als Mittel zum Fortschritt benutzt – man darf den Faschismus wohl so betrachten – im zweiten Falle wendet sich der Volksgeist von seinem Volk ab und dieses verfällt ungunen Mächten, die es von seinem richtigen Wege ablenken – man darf den Bolschewismus so werten – oder es geht unter oder es findet zu einer neuen Aufgabe sich hin, ein neuer Volksgeist übernimmt die Führung der sich ihm frei zuwendenden. Jedes Volk, auch das deutsche, steht vor der Entscheidung in diesen Richtungen.” Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 7. Lieferung, “Die Kultur” (1930), 24.

¹⁸⁷ See e.g. Wadler, *Germanische Urzeit*, 12-28. Wadler classified Gobineau’s theories, along with Darwinism and Marxism, among the “fremden, westlichen Ideen, die in Deutschland die idealistische Gedankenwelt der Fichte, Schelling, Hegel in den Schatten drängten.” (13) His subsequent work recuperated many of the core concepts of anthroposophical race thinking; cf. “Rudolf Steiner und die arische Kulturepoche” in Arnold Wadler, *Das Rätsel der Indogermanen* (Basel: Geering, 1937), 79-100. Many of Wadler’s formulations echo Uehli, Gleich, and Karutz; he describes the Aryan as the “Träger der Menschheitsgeschichte” while saying of Native Americans: “Doch die Entfaltung des Denkbewusstseins blieb diesen Stämmen versagt, sie waren dem Untergang geweiht und erlagen

Others agreed that race was primarily a matter of the soul, while simultaneously rejecting “race mixing” as detrimental to spiritual progress.¹⁸⁸ The common denominator among such disparate viewpoints was the conviction that a merely physical emphasis on racial or national 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 an emphasis on spiritual conceptions of ‘blood’ and a concomitant rejection of materialism, intellectualism, positivism, liberalism, atomism, rationalism, mechanism, abstraction, and other traits unsuited to the German character. What anthroposophists shared with their nationalist, authoritarian, and *völkisch* contemporaries was an insistence on the Germanic essence as the highest expression of human ideals.

On the basis of these principles, several anthroposophists engaged in a series of critical debates with *völkisch* positions in the early 1930s. Anthroposophist appraisals of German nationalist politics sometimes involved Christian themes, which were central to Steiner’s teachings but contested within *völkisch* ranks.¹⁸⁹ Critically

schicksalsgemäss, kurz nach ihrer Berührung mit den Zukunfts-trägern der nachatlantischen Menschheit.” (94)

¹⁸⁸ Examples include Heise, “Ein paar Worte zum Dunkelhaar und Braunauge der Germanen” *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* vol. 8 (1914); in the July issue Heise wrote: “Der wahrhaft rassische arische Mensch hat den Adel in seiner Seele.” (28) In subsequent issues he elaborated a predominantly negative view of racial mixing and intermarriage, firmly rejecting “das Rassengemisch von heute” (October, 186) while declaring: “So müssen heute wieder viele rassisch allzu zersetzte Mitmenschen abgestoßen werden, um den Wiederaufbau einer Hochrasse zu ermöglichen; ein ungeschriebenes Gesetz verlangt dies sowohl um vieler geistiger als sozialer Werte willen.” (189) In the September issue Heise 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)

¹⁸⁹ Examples include Friedrich Rittelmeyer, “Die Externsteine – Ein Erlebnis von Deutschtum und Christentum” *Die Christengemeinschaft* November 1932, 225-31; Richter, *Die Germanen als Wegbahner eines kosmischen Christentums*; Robert Goebel, “Christentum und deutsches Wesen” *Die Christengemeinschaft* April 1933, 11-12; and August Pauli, *Blut und Geist: Völkischer Glaube und Christentum* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1932), 7. Before turning to anthroposophy, Pauli (1869-1959) had worked for three years as secretary to Protestant luminary Johannes Müller, who had strong *völkisch* inclinations; for background see Harald Haury, *Von Riesa nach Schloß Elmau*:

reviewing the doctrines of figures such as Dinter, Ludendorff, and Rosenberg, these analyses sympathized with the “national will” such movements brought to expression, but found them too beholden to “the masses” and too compromised by materialism.¹⁹⁰ *Völkisch* authors, in anthroposophist eyes, had reversed the cause and effect relationship between spiritual decline and racial-ethnic degeneration.¹⁹¹ A decidedly ambivalent attitude toward antisemitism marks these anthroposophist treatments.¹⁹² In a related series of largely laudatory exchanges in 1931 with the right-wing circle around *Die Tat*, anthroposophists argued that the latter’s diagnosis of the political and economic situation was accurate, but the proposed cure was inadequate to confront the underlying spiritual causes of Germany’s crisis.¹⁹³ The *Tat* circle, according to their

Johannes Müller (1864-1949) als Prophet, Unternehmer und Seelenführer eines völkisch naturfrommen Protestantismus (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2005).

¹⁹⁰ Pauli’s pamphlet *Blut und Geist* criticizes an exclusive focus on one’s own race or nation while nonetheless declaring: “So ist es gut, wenn wir anfangen, wieder mehr Rassegefühl zu bekommen.” (13) Pauli is especially harsh on Mathilde Ludendorff’s anti-Christian polemics, and rejects *völkisch* religion as backward-looking. But the text concludes as follows: “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) For Pauli’s sympathetic response to Mathilde Ludendorff’s racial theories see August Pauli, “‘Sünde’ und ‘Selbstschöpfung’: Aus Anlaß von Alfred Rosenbergs Schrift ‘Protestantische Rompilger’” *Die Christengemeinschaft* December 1937, 239-42.

¹⁹¹ See e.g. Hannes Razum, “Das völkische Problem” *Das Goetheanum* July 6, 1930, 212-14. Rejecting both extremist *völkisch* politics and “internationalist tendencies,” Razum declares: “Das völkische Problem ist heute ein geistiges Problem und nur aus geistigen Erkenntnissen heraus zu lösen.” (213)

¹⁹² Pauli, *Blut und Geist* disapproves of “die häßlichen Auswüchse der antisemitischen Bewegung” (24) while holding the Jews primarily responsible for the “auflösenden Wirkungen des Intellektualismus und Materialismus”: “Und man kann verstehen, daß eine völkische Bewegung, die sich gegen diese Auflösungen wehrt, gerade das Judentum in der Gegenwart als ein Element der Zersetzung empfindet.” (29) “Überwinden wir den Materialismus, dem wir selbst so reichlich verfallen sind, und wir werden bald wenig Anlaß mehr haben, über den schädigenden Einfluß des Judentums zu klagen. Das wäre ein gerechterer und wirksamerer Antisemitismus als das Schüren von Haßinstinkten.” (30) “In diesem Sinne wäre z. B. die Frage zu erheben, ob die in der neuen Zeit ziemlich zahlreich gewordenen Mischehen zwischen Deutschen und Juden wünschenswert sind.” Many such marriages are “eine Sünde gegen die Natur,” and Pauli concludes that “solche Verbindungen möglichst beschränkt bleiben müßten.” (30)

¹⁹³ Wilhelm Salewski, “Zur Weltlage” *Anthroposophie* August 2, 1931, 241-43. Nearly half of Salewski’s article consists of excerpts from an essay in *Die Tat* by Ferdinand Fried (pen name for Ferdinand Friedrich Zimmermann); for background on Fried see Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*, 273-78; Breuer, *Ordnungen der Ungleichheit*, 219-22; Lebovics, *Social Conservatism and the Middle Classes in Germany*, 178-204; Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1984), 189-91, 357; Christoph Werth,

anthroposophist interlocutors, failed to realize that Steiner had already pointed the way to salvation.¹⁹⁴

On occasion anthroposophists also endorsed nationalist political organizations. From 1928 to 1930, for example, 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, the party system, and parliamentary democracy through an "organic community."¹⁹⁵ When anthroposophists made their own explicitly political pronouncements during the Weimar era, however, it was generally in the context of various occult conspiracy theories.¹⁹⁶ The hidden maneuverings of evil forces plotting

Sozialismus und Nation: Die deutsche Ideologiediskussion zwischen 1918 und 1945 (Weimar: Verlag für Geisteswissenschaften, 2001), 121-42; and Fritzsche, *Politische Romantik und Gegenrevolution*, passim.

¹⁹⁴ Wilhelm Salewski, "Dreigliederung oder totaler Staat? Offener Brief an den Kreis der 'Tat'" *Anthroposophie* August 30, 1931, 275-77. Salewski begins by asserting that the texts in *Die Tat* "zum Ernsthaftesten und Aufschlußreichsten gehören, was über die gegenwärtigen Weltprobleme in öffentlichen Zeitschriften erschienen ist." He goes on to criticize their political analyses for neglecting to take Steiner's teachings into account. Comparably sympathetic appraisals of *Die Tat*'s arguments can be found in Karl Heyer, "Weltwirtschaftskrise" *Anthroposophie* July 19, 1931, 226-27, and Heyer, "Kapitalistische Weltwirtschaft oder staatswirtschaftliche nationale Autarkie?" *Anthroposophie* September 6, 1931, 283-85; while acclaiming Fried's great insights, Heyer admonishes *Die Tat* for an insufficiently profound assessment of the German mission and the destiny of *Mitteleuropa*.

¹⁹⁵ Karl Heyer, "Das 'Jungdeutsche Manifest': Ein Streben nach sozialer Erneuerung" *Anthroposophie* June 10, 1928, 189-90; Heyer, "Erneuerungsbestrebungen im inneren politischen Leben Deutschlands" *Anthroposophie* June 1, 1930, 171-73; see also the positive references to the *Jungdeutscher Orden* in *Die Christengemeinschaft* May 1930. Cf. Artur Mahraun, *Das Jungdeutsche Manifest* (Berlin: Jungdeutscher Verlag, 1927); Mahraun, *Gegen getarnte Gewalten: Weg und Kampfeiner Volksbewegung* (Berlin: Jungdeutscher Verlag, 1928); Mahraun, *Der Aufbruch: Sinn und Zweck der Volksnationalen Reichsvereinigung* (Berlin: Jungdeutscher Verlag, 1929); Mahraun, *Jungdeutschtum und Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Jungdeutscher Verlag, 1933). For background on Mahraun and the *Jungdeutscher Orden* see Klaus Hornung, *Der Jungdeutsche Orden* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1958); Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*, 38-39, 108-09, 162-65, 300-01; Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik*, 124-29, 316-18; Lohalm, *Völkischer Radikalismus*, 210-14; Michael Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten: Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), 57-60; Hans Mommsen, *Aufstieg und Untergang der Republik von Weimar* (Munich: Ullstein, 2001), 287-89; Jürgen Genuneit, *Völkische Radikale in Stuttgart: Zur Vorgeschichte und Frühphase der NSDAP 1890-1925* (Stuttgart: Projekt Zeitgeschichte im Kulturstad der Landeshauptstadt, 1982), 166-67; Ernst Posse, *Die politischen Kampfbünde Deutschlands* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1931), 51-59; Clifton Ganyard, *Artur Mahraun and the Young German Order: An Alternative to National Socialism in Weimar Political Culture* (Lewiston: Mellen, 2008).

¹⁹⁶ This conspiracist strand 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-

against Germany figured prominently in such analyses.¹⁹⁷ This theme was especially common in references to the World War, which anthroposophists continued to depict as a conspiratorial effort to destroy Germany.¹⁹⁸ In several instances, the blame for

66, 377-78; Steiner, *Die soziale Grundforderung unserer Zeit*, 64-65, 255, 320; Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, 348, 485. On “Anglo-American secret societies” and their sinister plans for Germany see Steiner, *Geistige und soziale Wandlungen in der Menschheitsentwicklung*, 259. Steiner was inclined to view even ‘materialism’ in conspiratorial terms: “For the spiritual world surely exists; but people can turn away from it. And the materialist worldview can be called the great conspiracy against the spirit. This materialist worldview is not merely an error, it is a conspiracy, the conspiracy against the spirit.” Rudolf Steiner, *Die okkulte Bewegung im neunzehnten Jahrhundert und ihre Beziehung zur Weltkultur* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1986), 266.

¹⁹⁷ The work of Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz (1869-1945) is exemplary in this regard; see e.g. Polzer-Hoditz, *Politische Betrachtungen auf Grundlage der Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*; Polzer-Hoditz, *Der Kampf gegen den Geist und das Testament Peters des Grossen* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1922); Polzer-Hoditz, “Zweiwelten-Theorie im Dienste westlicher und römischer Politik” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 50 (1920); Polzer-Hoditz, “Weltanschauungsniedergang und die Dreigliederung” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 6 (1919); Polzer-Hoditz, “Der Kampf gegen Ententen” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 34 (1920); Polzer-Hoditz, “Soziale Dreigliederung und der Osten” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 43 (1920). Polzer-Hoditz focused on “geheime Gesellschaften” and “diabolischen Mächte, die sich bewußter und unbewußter Agenten bedienen”: Polzer-Hoditz, “Welthungersnot und Dreigliederung” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 31 (1920). See also Polzer-Hoditz, *Die Notwendigkeit der Erhaltung und Weiterentwicklung des deutschen Geisteslebens für die europäische Kultur* (Vienna: Manzsch, 1919). Steiner was personally very close to Polzer-Hoditz; see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 717, 1281; Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Biographie*, 622-24, 637-38, 953, 968; Wehr, *Rudolf Steiner*, 382. Steiner praised Polzer-Hoditz’s conspiracist works; cf. Steiner, *Soziale Ideen, Soziale Wirklichkeit, Soziale Praxis*, 241. For a celebratory anthroposophist view, and a continuation of anthroposophical conspiracy theory, see Thomas Meyer, *Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz – Ein Europäer* (Basel: Perseus, 1994). Further examples of latter-day anthroposophist conspiracy literature include Heinz Pfeifer, *Brüder des Schattens: Versuch einer Hintergrundanalyse zur Weltpolitik* (Zurich: Uebersax, 1987); Karl Buchleitner, *Wer macht die Realität? Das Schicksal der Dreigliederungsidee* (Schaffhausen: Novalis, 1989); Buchleitner, *Anthroposophie: Bewegung und Gesellschaft 1902 - 1999. Von der Dramatik eines Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Heinrich, 1999); Dieter Rüggeberg, *Theosophie und Anthroposophie im Licht der Hermetik* (Wuppertal: Rüggeberg, 1999); Rüggeberg, *Geheimpolitik: Der Fahrplan zur Weltherrschaft* (Wuppertal: Rüggeberg, 1991); Sergei O. Prokofieff, *The Spiritual Origins of Eastern Europe and the Future Mysteries of the Holy Grail* (London: Temple Lodge, 1993); Amnon Reuveni, *In the Name of the ‘New World Order’: Manifestations of Decadent Powers in World Politics* (London: Temple Lodge, 1996); Terry Boardman, *Mapping the Millennium, Behind the Plans of the New World Order* (London: Temple Lodge, 1998); Terry Boardman, “Anthroposophy and the Question of Conspiracy in Modern History” *New View* March 2000, 42-45; Thomas Meyer, *Reality, Truth and Evil: Facts, Questions and Perspectives on September 11, 2001* (Forest Row: Temple Lodge, 2005).

¹⁹⁸ A representative example insists that the war was caused by “the West” in its effort to “destroy the Germanic race.” (Fritz Kipp, “Zum Gedenktag für die Opfer des Weltkrieges” *Anthroposophie* September 4, 1924, 1-3) See also Hermann Heisler, *Krieg oder Frieden* (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, “Ich und Nation” *Anthroposophie* December 28, 1930, 409-11; Ernst Moll, “Der Krieg in Ost und West” *Die Christengemeinschaft* March 1931, 353-64; Jürgen von Grone, “Nachwort zu Versailles” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* August 1933, 15-16; Franz

these nefarious behind-the-scenes intrigues was placed not just on the English, French, Russians or Americans, but on the Jews.¹⁹⁹ Conjoining esoteric tropes with antisemitic assumptions, these texts reflected widespread anthroposophist anxieties over Jewishness and its relation to Germanness.²⁰⁰ The foremost example is Karl Heise's 1918 tome blaming the World War on a cabal of Freemasons and Jews.²⁰¹ Heise wrote the book with Steiner's encouragement, basing its argument on Steiner's own

Krause, "Rudolf Steiner während des Weltkrieges" *Das Goetheanum* November 26, 1933, 379-80; Jürgen von Grone, "Generaloberst von Moltke im Kriegsausbruch" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* July 1934, 3-5.

¹⁹⁹ See e.g. Wilhelm von Heydebrand, "Ausführungen über gewisse Grundlagen der Politik" *Das Reich* April 1919, 112-16, which blames the World War on English occultists, Freemasons, Jews, and socialists, whose goal was the "Vernichtung Deutschlands." Heydebrand warned that "die Freimaurer-Logen der Anglo-Amerikaner und ihre romanischen Anhängsel stark von einem intellektuell hochentwickelten Judentum durchsetzt sind." Wilhelm von Heydebrand, "Die schwarz-rot-gelbe Internationale und ihr Gegensatz" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 9 (1919). Even the race-obsessed militant German nationalists, according to Heydebrand, were unwittingly replicating "Semitismus": Wilhelm von Heydebrand, "Alldeutschtum und Dreigliederung" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 43 (1920). For a similar argument cf. Ernst Boldt, *Christentum und Sozialismus (Anthroposophie und Dreigliederung): Ein Weckruf an den deutschen Geist* (Munich: Rösl, 1923), 161-63.

²⁰⁰ Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Der Deutsche in seiner Weltaufgabe zwischen Rußland und Amerika* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1932) rejects "Einheitsbestrebungen wie Internationalismus und Pazifismus, in denen sich der jüdische Geist wohl fühlt" (4). For anthroposophists, "Christlich-germanischer Geist mit seinem ewigen Charakter denkt eben anders als der unfreie Machtwille jüdisch-römischer Dekadenz." (Kersten, "Rudolf Steiner und das Deutschtum," 672) See also Rittelmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner als Führer zu neuem Christentum*, 83-90; Gleich, *Die Menschwerdung des Weltenwortes*, 12-15, 35-45; Doldinger, *Christus bei den Germanen*, 66-67; Wachsmuth, *Mysterien- und Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit*, 115-28. Already during the war Lienhard had 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." (*Deutschlands europäische Sendung*, 16)

²⁰¹ Karl Heise, *Entente-Freimaurerei und Weltkrieg* (Basel: Finckh, 1919); the first edition appeared in 1918. See also Karl Heise, *Okkultes Logentum* (Leipzig: Max Altmann, 1921). For context see H. D. Schmidt, "Anti-Western and Anti-Jewish Tradition in German Historical Thought" *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 4 (1959), 37-60. Heise's notion of a confluence of Jews and Freemasons was historically dubious to begin with; for background see Jacob Katz, "The Fight for Admission to Masonic Lodges" *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 11 (1966), 171-209; Helmut Reinalter, ed., *Aufklärung und Geheimgesellschaften: Zur politischen Funktion und Sozialstruktur der Freimaurerlogen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1989); and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, "Brothers or Strangers? Jews and Freemasons in Nineteenth-century Germany" *German History* 18 (2000), 143-61. On anti-masonic myths during and after WWI see Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *Die Politik der Geselligkeit: Freimaurerlogen in der deutschen Bürgergesellschaft 1840-1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 333-42; available in English as Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *The Politics of Sociability: Freemasonry and German Civil Society, 1840-1918* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 282-90.

teachings, and Steiner himself wrote the foreword to the book and contributed a substantial sum toward publication costs.²⁰² The book offered a plethora of conspiratorial claims about the occult scheming of foreign powers against Germany, and frequently identified the culprits as Jews, from bankers to Bolsheviks.²⁰³

For other anthroposophists, however, the threat that Germany faced, aside from materialism and international meddling, was not specifically Jewish but a vague ensemble of secretive “financial powers” and their anti-German ploys.²⁰⁴ An equally formidable menace was Bolshevism. Anthroposophist publications from the early 1930s warned again and again against Bolshevism and Marxism, but rarely against nationalism, Fascism, or Nazism.²⁰⁵ To counter such dangers from abroad and from

²⁰² Cf. Rudolf Steiner, *Zur Geschichte und aus den Inhalten der erkenntniskultischen Abteilung der Esoterischen Schule 1904 bis 1914* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1987), 55-60; Steiner, *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Gegner*, 568-70; Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Chronik*, 392; *Nachrichten der Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung* 24 (1969), 7-13. In January 1918 Steiner gave Heise 3600 Swiss Francs to subsidize the publishing costs. Heise recounted the 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), writing: “Mein Buch ‘Entente-Freimaurerei und Weltkrieg’ (Erstausgabe 1918) habe ich auf Anregung von Dr. Steiner geschrieben.” Heise explained that Steiner provided advice during the writing of the book, wrote the Foreword, contributed the financing, and even wrote the summary text sent to periodicals for review of the book. Heise also noted that he dedicated the book to Steiner after asking and receiving the latter’s permission.

²⁰³ Heise holds the Jews responsible for the World War (*Entente-Freimaurerei und Weltkrieg* 32-33, 84, 262, 295, etc.), warns repeatedly against “Jewish capitalists” (e.g. 286), claims that the Roosevelts are Jewish and that their real name is Rosenfeld (285), that Woodrow Wilson's wife is Jewish (296), that the news agencies are controlled by Jews (306), that the Jews control Britain and the Empire is a plaything of the Zionists (122-127), and that Bolshevism is an Anglo-Jewish invention (253). Heise invokes Steiner and anthroposophy throughout the book, at one point praising Steiner as the alternative to “Jewish thinking” (297). The book draws heavily on ariosophist sources as well. Heise’s work continues to find anthroposophist admirers; Ursula Marcum, for example, writes: “What makes Heise’s book special is his treatment of Jewish influence in world affairs.” Marcum, “Rudolf Steiner: An Intellectual Biography,” 408. See also the extremely positive reviews of Heise’s book in *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 47 (1920) and *Das Reich* January 1919, 474.

²⁰⁴ 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. Heyer’s 1932 text *Das Schicksal des deutschen Volkes und seine Not* depicts a Germany threatened from West and East, by “Amerikanismus” and “Bolschewismus,” both of which are forms of “Materialismus”: “Diese Mächte stürmen heute von Ost und West auf Mitteleuropa herein, von außen als Bedrohung, von Innen als Versuchung,” threatening to destroy “das deutsche Volk” (23).

²⁰⁵ Anthroposophist analyses of Bolshevism include Valentin Tomberg, “Die geheime Losung des Bolschewismus” *Anthroposophie* May 4, 1930, 137-39; Rittelmeyer, *Der Deutsche in seiner Weltaufgabe zwischen Rußland und Amerika*; Georg Nemes, “Zum mitteleuropäischen Geistesleben” *Das Goetheanum* May 24, 1931, 165-66; Ernst von Hippel, *Der Bolschewismus und seine Überwindung*

within, anthroposophy sought a “spiritual revolution” in Germany for the sake of the whole world.²⁰⁶ Such a revolution could not be reached through merely political means, particularly under the conditions of the Weimar Republic.²⁰⁷ Thus many anthroposophists simply avoided the political sphere, seeing it as a demeaning and corrupt distraction that was inevitably at odds with their conception of a spiritual aristocracy.²⁰⁸ Those who did have an identifiable political affiliation were often enough on the right.²⁰⁹ In most cases, though, anthroposophist public statements

(Breslau: Ullrich, 1937). Karutz, *Von Goethe zur Völkerkunde der Zukunft*, 66, claims that Bolshevik Russia “wants to annihilate the German people.”

²⁰⁶ Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner*, 122. Boldt also wrote: “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.” (184)

²⁰⁷ Karl Heyer, “Staatsentwicklung und Ichentwicklung” *Anthroposophie* April 26, 1931, 132-34 argues that what is wrong with the “modern state” is its “unmystischer, durch und durch rationalistischer Charakter”; the modern state “zerstört nach und nach die alten, vielfach überlebten, organischen Unterverbände und Gliederungen des Mittelalters.” “Die so atomisierten Individuen faßt der Staat wie von außen her zusammen in einer mechanistischen, abstrakten Einheit.” (133) For his critique of “die westeuropäische Demokratie liberalistischen Gepräges” see Heyer, “Der Staat als Befreier der menschlichen Individualität” *Anthroposophie* May 3, 1931, 137-38. Lauer, *Die Volksseelen Europas*, 156, argues that even the Kaiserreich was deformed by its imitation of “die demokratisch-liberalistische Staatsform des Westens.”

²⁰⁸ Some sense of the degree of this political abstinence can be gained from the standard forms submitted by anthroposophist authors to the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* after 1933; these forms included a question about previous party memberships. Assuming the answers were truthful, the overall finding is that a substantial majority of anthroposophist respondents did not belong to any political party at any time before 1933: 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, and only for a few months; Franz Dreidax was by his own account a member of the USPD from “Frühsommer 1919 bis Herbst 1919” (BA RK/185: 1992).

²⁰⁹ Wilhelm zur Linden’s memoir *Blick durchs Prisma*, for instance, indicates a fairly strong authoritarian, old conservative (and thus non-Nazi and non-*völkisch*) 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 Norwegian Anthroposophical Society was apolitical and that its leading personalities played no role in politics, but added: “Zum überwiegenden Teil stehen sie den konservativen Kreisen nahe.” (BA R58/6188/1: 25) Several anthroposophist *Reichsschrifttumskammer* files indicate similar orientations. In December 1933, for example, Richard Karutz described his political outlook prior to 1933 as “konservativ bezw.

centered on an emphatic but politically undefined re-affirmation of the mission of the German spirit.²¹⁰

This indistinct political outlook, couched in spiritual terms, contributed to the wary reception of anthroposophist ideas within the German right between the world wars; the considerable degree of ideological overlap between anthroposophical thought and *völkisch* ideals did not for the most part lead to a practical convergence. An additional reason for this partial disjunction between theory and practice may have had to do with the differing social makeup of the anthroposophist and *völkisch* milieus; the populist resentment that characterized *völkisch* politics did not often arise among comparatively well-heeled anthroposophists.²¹¹ But the liberal and

deutschnational" (BA RK/I268: 2894); in November 1933, Kurt Piper characterized his previous political affiliation as "parteilos – national" (BA RK/I457: 2538); Karl Jungclausen was a member of the Deutsche Volkspartei before 1933 (BA PK/F213:2828). Alwin Seifert belonged to the DNVP from 1920-23 (BA RK/B185: 2301); and three of the seven leading anthroposophists from Thüringen profiled in BA R58/6188/1: 316-335 belonged to the DNVP as well. The head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Weimar, Horst von Henning auf Schönhoff, was a very active member and supporter of the DNVP during the Weimar period (BA R58/6188/1: 323). Henning was a member of Steiner's Esoteric School from 1904 onward, and in 1923 was one of the "Vertrauenspersönlichkeiten der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland." For general background see Raimund von dem Bussche, *Konservatismus in der Weimarer Republik: Die Politisierung des Unpolitischen* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1998).

²¹⁰ See e.g. Walter Kühne, "Deutschtum und Christentum" *Anthroposophie* April 10, 1927, 59; Ernst Uehli, "Geisterneuerung" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 27 (1920); Roman Boos, "Idee und Ideal des Deutschtums" *Anthroposophie* December 5, 1926, 193-94; Boos, "Krise des deutschen Geistes" *Das Goetheanum* November 16, 1930, 364-65; Hans Erhard Lauer, "Deutschlands Wiedergeburt aus dem Geiste Goethes" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 30 (1920); Rittelmeyer, *Deutschtum*; Rudolf Steiner, "Die verjüngenden Kräfte der deutschen Volksseele" *Anthroposophie* January 1932, 121-40; Rudolf Steiner, "Die tragende Kraft des deutschen Geistes" *Anthroposophie* June 1934, 195-219.

²¹¹ Alongside the perceptive and valuable scholarship treating the *völkisch* phenomenon primarily as a worldview, an alternative approach focuses on a sociological analysis of its adherents (the two strands are perhaps best represented in the work of Uwe Puschner and Stefan Breuer, respectively). According to this latter approach, the *völkisch* movement was based largely in the primary sector – self-sufficient producers, agriculture, artisans, etc. – as well as the urban *Mittelstand*, who were typically on the losing end of the modernizing processes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; see e.g. Breuer, *Die Völkischen in Deutschland*, 13-17. Anthroposophy, in contrast, often drew on a more upscale clientele, including a significant number of nobles, wealthy industrialists, and academically trained professionals; its home territory was not so much the *Mittelstand* as 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). More detailed research is needed on the social composition of the anthroposophist movement; for data on the members of the Nuremberg and Breslau branches of the Anthroposophical Society, including

cosmopolitan strands within anthroposophy also served a braking function in this regard, and the very emphasis on its apolitical character constituted an obstacle to potential anthroposophical drift in a *völkisch* direction. By the same token, anthroposophists frequently failed to recognize and comprehend the political contours of the era, or respond to them in a coherent manner. In this and other senses, the ‘unpolitical’ nature of anthroposophy was a double-edged sword.

In its simultaneous yearning for a “spiritual revolution” and disdain for concrete political action, anthroposophy’s self-proclaimed ‘unpolitical’ stance revealed an unstable dynamic beneath the genteel veneer of esoteric enlightenment. By neglecting to make its implicit political content explicit, anthroposophy’s occult underpinnings hampered its practical effectiveness externally and impeded candid political self-reflection internally. Anthroposophist efforts to influence political events between 1917 and 1921, which mostly garnered opprobrium from non-anthroposophists, led in turn to a re-assertion of the apolitical nature of anthroposophy. At the same time, 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 and so forth as the most promising route to realizing anthroposophist ambitions. The outline of these ambitions was left unclear. Before the arrival of the Nazi regime, what Steiner’s followers

occupations, see the 1935 membership lists in BA R58/5660: 52-55, BA R58/6189/1: 5-14, and BA R58/6194/2: 368-376.

propounded was a spiritual re-birth of Germany, a vision which for the most part remained elusive and nebulous.²¹²

The convoluted details of the interactions between Steiner's followers and the ideological currents of the time do not yield a clear political profile of the anthroposophical movement in the waning years of the Weimar Republic. These features nonetheless help account for the incidents of mutual consternation between anthroposophists and various denizens of the right-wing spectrum in interwar Germany. The fractious nature of both the occult milieu and the inchoate circles of the nationalist right 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 rival visions of regeneration. Committed as it was to an 'unpolitical' self-conception as a vehicle for spiritual renewal, anthroposophy largely abjured open political engagement, even while passing judgement on various counterparts and contemporaries. Emphasizing spiritual transformation over political engagement, anthroposophy simultaneously alienated militant nationalist and racist organizations while leaving itself open to and undefended against potential appropriation once such organizations achieved state power.

²¹² Such visions were common enough at the time; 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; 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; 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; Jost Hermand, "Ultima Thule: Völkische und faschistische Zukunftsvisionen" in Hermand, *Orte. Irgendwo: Formen utopischen Denkens* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1981), 61-86; and Thomas Rohkrämer, "Visions of a Spiritual Unification in the German Empire" in Rohkrämer, *A Single Communal Faith?*, 84-120.

Chapter 3

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’ both within mainstream German society and among minority worldview groups associated with occultism. At the same time, different Nazi agencies reacted in very different ways to the expectations and petitions put forward by those who viewed their own ‘spiritual science’ as the true salvation of Germany and of the world. 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 both anxieties and hopes about the possibility of a Nazi government or another authoritarian regime, and the restrictions and potentials this could bring for movements such as anthroposophy. 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.”¹ 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.”² One point of concern was the possibility that the perceived “prominence of the Israelite element” within anthroposophical ranks, despite the small number of anthroposophists from Jewish backgrounds, could unnecessarily alienate Nazi observers.³

Responding assertively to negative statements about Steiner from some Nazi quarters, several anthroposophists devoted considerable effort between 1930 and 1932 to persuading Hitler and other leading Nazis of the virtues of anthroposophy.⁴ These efforts were often conducted through private channels, and in many cases were based on the assumption that Hitler and other high-level Nazis would surely recognize anthroposophy’s merits if exposed to the proper information.⁵ A Nuremberg

¹ Karl Heyer to Moritz Bartsch, October 11, 1931, BA R58/7408: “dass seit mehr als einem Jahr über unser aller Häupter die Gefahr einer Rechtsdiktatur schwebt. Was in unserer unruhigen Zeit *da* als Verfolgungen, Verbote und dergl. kommen könnte, weiss der Himmel.”

² Karl Heyer to Helene Röchling, January 29, 1932, BA R58/7408, asking Röchling to use her connections in right-wing circles to help publicize anthroposophy, and particularly materials regarding “Steiner und das Deutschtum,” among people “die der politischen Rechtsbewegung angehören.”

³ Karl Heyer to Oskar Franz Wienert, December 16, 1931 (BA R58/5946: 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 R58/6191: 24), denying rumors among the membership that he is 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.

⁴ See the 1930-1932 correspondence of Karl Heyer, Oskar Franz Wienert, Georg Klenk and Baron Tucher in BA R58/5946: 1429-1471. For example, Wienert to Heyer, December 1, 1931 (R58/5946: 1436-1438) emphasizes his 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).

⁵ See e.g. Heyer to Klenk, September 7, 1932 (BA R58/5946: 1426) regarding an anthroposophist physician in Munich who reportedly treated Hitler and had apprised his patient of the benefits of anthroposophy.

anthroposophist with “personal connections to Hitler”⁶ was asked to intercede on behalf of anthroposophy in a meeting with the Nazi leader in November 1930.⁷ In 1931 anthroposophists endeavored to promote positive coverage of their movement in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the chief Nazi newspaper, highlighting “how important this matter is in case of a National Socialist government.”⁸ In May 1932, anthroposophists tried to provide materials on Steiner to Nazi Reichstag member Hans Frank.⁹ Steiner’s followers foresaw the potential for constructive cooperation with leading 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 quiet unfolding of Germany’s esoteric destiny. For others, the advent of the Third Reich signaled the fulfillment of Germany’s spiritual purpose. Some anthroposophists had already joined the Nazi movement before 1933, such as Hanns Rascher, a follower of Steiner since 1908 and one of the founders of

⁶ Heyer to Wienert, February 6, 1932 (BA R58/5946: 1433) reports that Baron Tucher in Nuremberg, a member of the Anthroposophical Society, “hat persönliche Beziehungen zu Hitler.” In December 1933 Tucher publicly defended biodynamic agriculture against criticism from the League of Professional Farmers (BA R58/6197/1: 187).

⁷ 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)

⁸ Heyer to Wienert, November 28, 1931, BA R58/5946: 1438. Anthroposophist Jürgen von Grone originally recommended that Heyer contact Wienert in order to draw on the latter’s Nazi connections. Much of the correspondence stresses that inaccurate and unsympathetic Nazi perceptions of anthroposophy not only present a potential obstacle to anthroposophist aims, but an unfortunate compromising of the goals of Nazism itself.

⁹ 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 in 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.

anthroposophical medicine, who joined the NSDAP in 1931.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ Other anthroposophists were less sanguine about the new rulers, finding Nazism insufficiently spiritual, even if it did display 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."¹²

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.¹³ 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,

¹⁰ Rascher's party correspondence file is in BA PK/O19: 1471-78. For brief biographical information on Rascher (1880-1952) see Selg, ed., *Anthroposophische Ärzte*, 124, which does not mention his Nazi party membership.

¹¹ Examples include Hans Krauch, leader of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Giessen, who became an NSDAP member in April 1933 (BA R58/6188/1: 300); Max Babl, leader of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Erfurt, who joined the party in May 1933 (BA R58/6191/2: 544; BA R58/6188/1: 107); and Hermann Pöschel, leader of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Plauen, who also joined the party in May 1933 (BA R58/6193/2: 549). Steiner's followers outside of Germany sometimes saw the Nazi government as an opportunity as well; Swiss anthroposophist Karl Heise sent a copy of his book *Entente-Freimaurerei und Weltkrieg* to Hitler when he became Chancellor. See Karl Heise to Elisabeth Klein, March 24, 1937 (BA NS15/302: 58025). I discuss the book in the previous chapter.

¹² Letter from Günther Schubart, February 7, 1933 (BA R58/6193/1: 39): "Gerade deswegen, weil Hitler manches von Rudolf Steiner übernommen hat, sehe ich eine Gefahr in seinem Aufstiege, weil die wirkliche Durchgeistung fehlt."

¹³ 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.

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 the steadfast and courageous manner in which the leaders of the new Germany are taking control of the problems can, in my view, induce only admiration. It will surely produce good results.¹⁴

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.¹⁵ Steffen reassured the Nazi officials that anthroposophy was not a political movement and rejected “superstition” and “English oriented theosophy.” He dwelled at length on anthroposophy’s vigorous opposition to Marxism, and concluded by invoking “German fidelity.” Like other submissions to Nazi leaders, the letter was meant to counter damaging rumors about Steiner’s commitment to Germany stemming from the contentious relationship between anthroposophy and *völkisch* circles during the Weimar period. This negative publicity posed serious risks for anthroposophical organizations as the Nazi regime consolidated power. In terms of membership numbers, however, the early years of the Third Reich proved to be a boon to the

¹⁴ Ibid., 41.

¹⁵ 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*. His letter stressed: “Gegen die Kriegsschuldflüge hat sich Rudolf Steiner seit Anfang des Krieges auf das energischste gewehrt.” (34)

Anthroposophical Society in Germany; its membership increased 25% between the end of 1932 and September 1935.¹⁶

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. After 1933 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, the Deputy of the Führer, as well as his staff, above all two of his chief lieutenants, Ernst Schulte-Strathaus and Alfred Leitgen, who actively intervened time and again on behalf of anthroposophical efforts. A further high official in the Interior Ministry, Lotar Eickhoff, worked with Hess and his staff to promote and protect anthroposophist undertakings. In addition to these figures, Nazi philosopher Alfred Baeumler used his position as head of the Office of Science in the so-called *Amt Rosenberg*, the agency which oversaw ideological education within the Nazi party, to help sustain anthroposophist publishing and other enterprises.¹⁷ SS general Otto Ohlendorf, finally, was a consistent advocate for anthroposophist interests from his position as department head within the SD or *Sicherheitsdienst*, the Nazi 'security service' and intelligence agency.¹⁸ Without endorsing Steiner's doctrines as a whole, these Nazi

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ For examples of anthroposophist views of Baeumler as a supporter see the February 1939 correspondence between Baeumler and Friedrich Lekve, BA NS15/301: 58097-98, and the March 1939 correspondence between Baeumler and E. A. Karl Stockmeyer, BA NS15/301: 58099-58101.

¹⁸ 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, and oversaw the "Meldungen aus dem Reich." In 1941 he was named commander of the Einsatzgruppe D, a mobile

leaders considered aspects of anthroposophy, both ideological and practical, 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 Reinhard Heydrich, and its 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:

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.¹⁹

Beginning in 1934, Heydrich and other adversaries of anthroposophy developed a concerted campaign to suppress anthroposophical activities and eventually eliminate anthroposophist organizational life from the Third Reich. These efforts in turn spurred

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 and was convicted of crimes against humanity and executed in June 1951. Ohlendorf’s older brother Heinrich was an anthroposophist, joining the Anthroposophical Society in 1929, and Ohlendorf himself chose an anthroposophical doctor, Wilhelm zur Linden, as his personal physician. During his post-war imprisonment at Landsberg, after sentencing and before his execution, Ohlendorf wrote a sworn affidavit recounting his relationship to anthroposophy. Extensive 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 a first-hand reminiscence of Ohlendorf’s abiding interest in and support for anthroposophical endeavors from an anthroposophist admirer of Ohlendorf, see Rudolf Hauschka, *At the Dawn of a New Age* (Vancouver: Steiner Book Centre, 1985), 69-74.

¹⁹ Heydrich to Darré, October 18, 1941, BA R16/1272.

a variety of anthroposophical strategies for accommodating themselves to the strictures of the Nazi state, often by appealing to their 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 did not placate confirmed anti-occultists, they did serve to 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. Over the course of the Nazi period, anthroposophy's enemies gradually gained the upper hand in this internal struggle and succeeding in dismantling anthroposophist organizations in a series of stages between 1935 and 1941.²⁰ For much of that time, however, German anthroposophy nonetheless 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, and at times even resulted in reversals of 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."²¹

²⁰ A minutely detailed chronology of events from an anthroposophist perspective is available in Werner's study *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, drawing on extensive archival materials. Werner's narrative focuses strongly on Nazi opponents of anthroposophy. My account will highlight sources that are not included in Werner's book, with attention to both supporters and antagonists of anthroposophy.

²¹ Bayerische Politische Polizei, May 24, 1934, "Betreff: Verbot der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft" (BA R58/6188/1: 271). On June 1 the central office of the political police in Berlin asked for a draft of a ban on the Anthroposophical Society: Der Politische Polizeikommandeur, Zentralbüro, Berlin, to Bayerische Politische Polizei, June 1, 1934, requesting an "Entwurf eines Verbots der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft" (BA R58/6188/1: 276). Similar plans for a broad suppression of

The initial plans were not realized outside of Munich, and in late June the political police rescinded the idea because their investigations produced no evidence that anthroposophy was hostile to the Nazi state.²² Undeterred, in August the Gestapo sought material linking the Anthroposophical Society to freemasonry,²³ while the central political police office in Berlin requested reports on anthroposophy from its regional affiliates.²⁴ 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,²⁵ while others portrayed the Anthroposophical Society as “superfluous” in the new Germany.²⁶ The state police in Hamburg reported that anthroposophical conceptions of “blood and race” stood “in contradiction to the foundation of the National Socialist worldview.”²⁷ In Mecklenburg, however, the political police discerned no danger to the state in the refined circles of the Anthroposophical Society.²⁸ In Karlsruhe, where the secretariat of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany was located, the Gestapo found no reason for

anthroposophy at the national level were raised in the following weeks: Sicherheitsamt to Zentralbüro des Politischen Polizeikommandeurs, June 11, 1934 (BA R58/6191/2: 625).

²² Bayerische Politische Polizei to Zentralbüro des Politischen Polizeikommandeurs, June 26, 1934 (BA R58/6193/2: 370), reporting that they have found “keinerlei Anhaltspunkte über eine staatsfeindliche Betätigung, die zu einer derartigen Massnahme ausreichend wären.”

²³ BA R58/6188/1: 258.

²⁴ Der Politische Polizeikommandeur, Zentralbüro, Berlin, to the Politischen Polizei der Länder, June 5, 1934, BA R58/6193/2: 369.

²⁵ Hessisches Staatspolizeiamt, September 8, 1934, BA R58/6188/1: 300.

²⁶ Gestapa Bremen to Zentralbüro des Politischen Polizeikommandeurs, July 30, 1934, BA R58/6193/2: 374.

²⁷ Staatspolizei Hamburg to Zentralbüro des Politischen Polizeikommandeurs, August 3, 1934, BA R58/6193/2: 380. The report also suspected that anthroposophy was “eine Geheimorganisation im freimaurerischen Sinne.”

²⁸ 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.” Other police reports considered anthroposophists suspect precisely because they were “intellectuals”: Staatspolizeistelle Düsseldorf to Gestapa Berlin, July 2, 1935, BA R58/6193/2: 434. The Mecklenburg report’s reference to the predominance of women in anthroposophical circles is echoed in other police documents, and may have played a role in the assessment of anthroposophy as unthreatening. Similar reports were filed by Italian police observers in the Fascist era, as discussed in chapter 7.

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.”²⁹

Similar findings were submitted by other local and regional agencies. A November 1934 SD report from Erfurt identified five leaders of the two anthroposophist groups in the city, and noted that four of the five were Nazi party members.³⁰ An October 1934 Gestapo report for the rest of Thuringia named several other leading anthroposophists in the province, along with their political affiliations. One was a suspected leftist; the others were classified on the right.³¹ 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. The head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in the town of Hildburghausen, Ernst Euterneck, was described as “a National Socialist, though he does not belong to the party.”³² These evaluations indicate significant support for the Nazi regime among prominent anthroposophists, and are particularly noteworthy coming from agents of the Gestapo and SD. Other reports emphasized the apolitical nature of anthroposophist events, such as a public presentation in Bremen in February 1935.³³ Three months later, the Bavarian political

²⁹ Gestapo Karlsruhe to Ministry of the Interior, March 21, 1934 (BA R58/6193/2: 372): “Die von mir im Lande Baden veranlassten Erhebungen über die Tätigkeit der Anthroposophischen Bewegung haben keine Tatsachen ergeben, die ein polizeiliches Einschreiten rechtfertigen könnten.” On the contrary, “die meisten Mitglieder sind ziemlich rechtsstehend, wenn sie nicht sogar der NSDAP angehören.”

³⁰ 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.

³¹ Thüringisches Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt, Weimar, to Gestapo Berlin, October 1934, BA R58/6188/1: 316-335.

³² Ibid., 332-33: “Euterneck bekennt sich heute zum Nationalsozialismus.” “Euterneck ist jetzt Nationalsozialist, gehört der Partei aber nicht als Mitglied an.”

³³ February 2, 1935 Schutzpolizei report on “Vortragsabend der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft” in Bremen, BA R58/6188/1: 349-350; the report concludes: “Irgendwelche Angriffe der Rednerin gegen den heutigen Staat konnten nicht festgestellt werden. Das politische Gebiet wurde während des Vortrages nicht im geringsten berührt.”

police reiterated that the political stance of Anthroposophical Society members did not justify a ban.³⁴

But anti-occultists within the Nazi security services were not appeased by such reports and continued to seek ways to obstruct anthroposophical activities, often by encouraging rumors that Steiner was Jewish and the movement under Jewish control. The anthroposophist leadership responded by applying for a retroactive *Ariernachweis* or ‘Aryan certificate’ for Steiner, which they duly received in October 1933.³⁵ Official communications from anthroposophist representatives constantly stressed Steiner’s Aryan descent. In September 1933, for example, 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 Germany and Germanness.³⁶ This combination of themes marked many anthroposophist statements during the early years of the regime: repudiating the notion that Steiner was Jewish and that anthroposophy was under Jewish influence, and highlighting Steiner’s German nationalist credentials as well as those of his followers. 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.”³⁷

Nazi opponents of anthroposophy, for their part, repeatedly invoked the supposedly Jewish nature of anthroposophy in order to bolster their case for

³⁴ Telegram from Bayerische Politische Polizei to Gestapo Berlin, May 9, 1935, Betr: Anthroposophische Gesellschaft (BA R58/6188/1: 367): “Die kuerzlich erfolgte Pruefung der in Bayern bestehenden Ortsgruppen ueber die polit. Einstellung der Mitglieder ergab keinerlei Anhaltspunkte, die zu einem Verbot ausreichend waeren.”

³⁵ 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.

³⁶ Marie Steiner to Rudolf Hess, September 25, 1933, BA R58/6191/2: 663.

³⁷ Elisabeth Klein, “Einiges Wesentliche über die Waldorfschulen” May 14, 1934 (BA R4901/2519: 46-47). Her text refers to the Weimar era as “before the Revolution.”

prohibiting it. SD agents routinely emphasized the role 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 1934.³⁸ Both men were considered Jews according to Nazi criteria and were eventually forced to emigrate to Switzerland. Büchenbacher (1887-1977), who counted as “half-Jewish” under the Nuremberg laws because his father was of Jewish origin, was raised Catholic and had fought for Germany as an officer on the front in WWI.³⁹ Such 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 with information on Leiste, explaining that he was in fact ‘Aryan.’⁴⁰ Misinformed assertions such as 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 and lived in Stuttgart, a center of anthroposophical activity.⁴¹ Neither was in fact Jewish, but claims to the contrary persisted in SD documents for years, purporting to reveal the “Jewish influence in anthroposophy.”⁴²

The underlying logic of these contentions was to associate anthroposophy with ‘foreign’ incursions into German culture by linking Steiner’s movement to putatively Jewish elements, along with supposed connections to freemasonry and an ‘international’ orientation, a perception reinforced by the relocation of the movement’s

³⁸ See e.g. SD Oberabschnitt Südwest, Stuttgart, March 25, 1936, BA R58/6191/2: 449.

³⁹ BA R58/6191: 14.

⁴⁰ May 1934 correspondence between Sicherheitsamt, Berlin, and Bayerische Politische Polizei, Munich, BA R58/6191/2: 635-637.

⁴¹ SD memorandum, October 13, 1934, “Betr: Anthroposophen in Stuttgart” (BA R58/6191/2: 576). In reality, Wachsmuth lived in Dornach while Poppelbaum lived in Hamburg.

⁴² SD “Bericht über die Anthroposophische Gesellschaft in Deutschland” (BA R58/6191: 198-206).

headquarters to Switzerland in 1913.⁴³ 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.”⁴⁴ She expressed concern that her non-Aryan status could cause consternation among other anthroposophists.

This 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.⁴⁵ The proposal was taken up a month later by Ernst Stegemann, a prominent and influential anthroposophist, who recommended that every branch of the Society identify its ‘non-Aryan’ members; they would then be asked to leave the Society and instead affiliate directly with the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach.⁴⁶ Stegemann asserted confidently that Jewish members would understand and support this measure. 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.⁴⁷ In September 1935 Poppelbaum assured the Gestapo

⁴³ As German anthroposophists frequently pointed out, Steiner originally planned to build the Goetheanum in Munich but was prevented from doing so by opposition from local construction officials; the move to Switzerland occurred because a patron provided land there.

⁴⁴ Alice Fels to Alfred Reebstein, October 1, 1934, BA R58/6191: 12: “daß ich mich nicht als ‘Jüdin’ jemals gefühlt habe.”

⁴⁵ Anton Deutzmann to Alfred Reebstein, July 29, 1935, BA R58/6189/2: 319. Reebstein replied on August 2 (ibid., 320), explaining that the membership rolls do not carry such information, only name, birth date, and address, and that the only way to determine which members were Aryan and which were not would be a poll of the membership, which Reebstein considered unfeasible (“nicht durchführbar”).

⁴⁶ Ernst Stegemann to Alfred Reebstein, August 28, 1935 (BA R58/6189/2: 323), citing Deutzmann’s letter and Reebstein’s reply. “Unsere jüdischen Mitglieder haben ja zweifellos Verständnis für diese vorgeschlagenen Massnahmen.” He asked that the procedure be carried out immediately.

⁴⁷ Hermann Poppelbaum to Franz Bintig, November 4, 1935, BA R58/6191: 23. In Poppelbaum’s words, while anyone could join the organization regardless of “physical prerequisites” (“leiblichen

that the entire leadership of the Anthroposophical Society was of “completely Aryan descent.”⁴⁸

In addition to rejecting any ‘Jewish influence’ on anthroposophy, the movement’s spokespeople vigorously denied its international character, distanced Steiner’s work from “crude occultism,” and boasted of its commitment to German spiritual life. A variety of documents sent to Nazi leaders by anthroposophist representatives ridiculed the notion that anthroposophy was international and strongly accentuated its contributions to Germany’s mission.⁴⁹ In a May 1934 letter to Himmler, Poppelbaum depicted Steiner as a pioneering opponent of the “lie of German war guilt,” the Versailles treaty, freemasonry, and socialism, and presented anthroposophical ‘spiritual science’ as an alternative to occultism. He wrote that “Rudolf Steiner defended Germandom against foreign spiritual powers” and warned that restrictions on anthroposophy would hinder loyal Germans from their work on “rebuilding the Reich.”⁵⁰ A month later Poppelbaum reiterated to Himmler that the notion of a Jewish influence on anthroposophy was “absolutely absurd.”⁵¹ The leadership of German anthroposophy released a pamphlet emphasizing the movement’s apolitical disposition alongside its opposition to Bolshevism and Marxism and its rejection of “vulgar occult practices.” The pamphlet insisted that anthroposophy was not exotic or flighty but concrete and practical, pointing to

Vorbedingungen”), only non-Jews could serve as officials. He added: “Mir ist ganz selbstverständlich, daß die anderen zurücktreten.”

⁴⁸ Poppelbaum to Gestapa 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 letterhead of the Anthroposophical Society, BA R58/6188/1: 267.

⁴⁹ See the May 1934 document “Ist die Anthroposophische Gesellschaft ‘international?’” signed “Die Leitung der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland” (BA R58/6188/1: 256).

⁵⁰ Poppelbaum to Himmler, May 9, 1934, on Anthroposophical Society in Germany letterhead, BA R58/6188/1: 276-77.

⁵¹ Poppelbaum to Himmler, June 9, 1934, BA R58/6188/1: 267. The letter also underscores anthroposophy’s “Beziehungen zum völkischen Ideengut,” and points out that Karl Heise’s book on the dangers of freemasonry and Western secret societies was written on the basis of Steiner’s own teachings.

Waldorf schools, eurythmy, anthroposophical medicine, and biodynamic agriculture as particular achievements on behalf of Germany.⁵²

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 to oblige party and state officials. The questions they faced ranged from skeptical to hostile, and their answers frequently invoked not only racial and political reliability but above all Germanness as a cardinal anthroposophical quality. Their references to Steiner underlined the suitability of his ideas for the new Germany. In August 1935 Poppelbaum told Nazi functionaries that Steiner's teachings on 'social threefolding' were "strikingly reminiscent of many of today's endeavors."⁵³ These claims received support from Nazi allies of anthroposophy. In March 1935 Hess's delegate Schulte-Strathaus asked the Minister of Education to make an exception for Waldorf schools and not treat them as other private schools, because of their special value to National Socialism.⁵⁴ Similar endorsements of biodynamics from Nazi leaders were especially common. In addition to these general themes, Poppelbaum and his colleagues called attention to the prominence of Nazi party members within the Anthroposophical Society, pointing to "a whole lot" of such members on several occasions.⁵⁵ Writing to Hess's staff in May 1935, Poppelbaum noted that "some of our members are esteemed party members."⁵⁶

⁵² *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). The pamphlet notes that Steiner was "rein deutscher Abkunft" and declares that the Anthroposophical Society in Germany has no international connections.

⁵³ BA R58/6193/2: 423, Poppelbaum's written responses to questions posed by a local Nazi official in Hamburg.

⁵⁴ Schulte-Strathaus to Bernhard Rust, March 8, 1935, BA R4901/2519: 238-240.

⁵⁵ Poppelbaum, August 1935, BA R58/6193/2: 423; in response to the question "Sind Nationalsozialisten Mitglieder der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft?" he replied: "Ja, eine ganze Reihe, sowohl hier in Hamburg, wie auch in anderen Städten und kleineren Gruppen."

⁵⁶ Poppelbaum to the Stab des Stellvertreters des Führers, May 22, 1935, BA R58/6193: 426-427. He pointed in particular to "die große Zahl der angesehenen Parteimitglieder, die im Versuchsring anthroposophischer Landwirte mitarbeiten."

What anthroposophists wanted to avert was a perception that anthroposophical commitment and Nazi participation were incompatible.⁵⁷ They argued that this perception would damage both the Nazi party and the Anthroposophical Society. Sometimes the insistence on the compatibility of anthroposophy and National Socialism was discreet, sometimes ostentatious. Hanns Rascher described himself as “just as much an anthroposophist as a National Socialist.”⁵⁸ Anthroposophist and party member Otto Julius Hartmann wore his party badge at an anthroposophical course he gave in annexed Austria in January 1939.⁵⁹ A variety of other anthroposophists, from Christian Community members to anthroposophical doctors, joined the party as well, while others joined the SA or SS. Nazi officials wary of occult subversion of the party were alarmed by these circumstances 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.⁶⁰ In October 1935 the Gestapo notified the Ministry of the Interior that they were preparing to ban anthroposophist organizations as dangerous propagators of occultism.⁶¹

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

⁵⁷ Poppelbaum, *ibid.*: “Es ist untragbar, daß eine anthroposophische Gesellschaft in Deutschland als für Nationalsozialisten vefehmte Gesellschaft behandelt wird.”

⁵⁸ Hanns Rascher to the Amt Rosenberg, April 18, 1935, in Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. III, 104.

⁵⁹ 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: BA RK/1222: 274. 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).

⁶⁰ Telegram from SD-Hauptamt to SD-Oberabschnitt Süd-West, Stuttgart, April 30, 1935, BA R58/6191/2: 512.

⁶¹ Gestapa Berlin to Ministry of Interior, October 14, 1935, BA R58/6194/1: 181.

Germany and the Anthroposophical Working Groups. Heydrich's order dissolving the groups, dated November 1, was carried out with a two week delay and in somewhat uncoordinated fashion. The order declared anthroposophy to be a danger to the state, basing this conclusion on charges of internationalism and connections to Jews, freemasons, and pacifists; it further stated that Waldorf schools propagated an individualist pedagogy, and that anthroposophy as a whole stood in opposition to National Socialist principles.⁶² While Heydrich had secured Bormann's agreement to the ban beforehand,⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ But Heydrich prevailed and the ban was carried out across the Reich, putting an abrupt end to the primary organizational forum for anthroposophist public activity in Germany.

Anthroposophist reactions to the ban revealed a range of latent and manifest attitudes toward the Nazi state. Jürgen von Grone, leader of the Anthroposophical Working Groups, wrote to Hess and Göring protesting the ban as a move bound to damage Germany, noting that Steiner rejected "western democratic constitutional forms" as a "catastrophe for the German people." Grone also wrote that Steiner battled Bolshevism as fiercely as possible and called 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.⁶⁵ A letter to Hitler from the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach, signed by

⁶² The text of Heydrich's order can be found in BA R58/6193/2: 524.

⁶³ Bormann to Heydrich, July 22, 1935, BA R58/6193/2: 436.

⁶⁴ Telegrams from Württembergisches Politisches Landespolizeiamt to Gestapo Berlin, November 16 to 18, 1935, BA R58/6193/2: 448-453. The Württemberg Interior Minister demanded materials substantiating the charges against anthroposophist groups.

⁶⁵ Jürgen von Grone to Hermann Göring, November 25, 1935, BA R58/6188/1: 8-10; Grone to Hess (identical text), November 25, 1935, BA R58/6195/1: 393.

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 it "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."⁶⁶ 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."⁶⁷

Less prominent anthroposophists protested the ban as well, expressing incredulity that Nazi officials could have failed to recognize the kindred spirit of anthroposophy. These missives offer a glimpse of views prevalent among the anthroposophical membership, and are at times more forthcoming than statements from the movement's acknowledged representatives. One anthroposophist warned that the suppression of Steiner's followers played into the hands of the Russian Bolsheviks, who viewed anthroposophy as their greatest challenger. He continued: "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."⁶⁸ An anthroposophical industrialist complained that Nazi leaders had fallen prey to lies about Steiner spread by the "Jewish and Masonic influenced press"

⁶⁶ General Anthroposophical Society, Dornach, to Adolf Hitler, November 17, 1935, BA R58/6194/1: 192. On December 5, 1935 they sent another letter to Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick (BA R58/6194/1: 207), once again signed by Steffen, Wachsmuth, and Steiner, asking that ban be reversed because it was based on mistaken information.

⁶⁷ 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 spiritual and cultural greatness of Germany" and "the great German nation".

⁶⁸ "Dr. Steiner hat aus seiner Geistesschau erkannt, daß die germanischen Völker und besonders auch Deutschland in dieser heutigen Zeitepoche das Hegemonievolk, das führende Volk der Erde sind." Karl Jordan to the Reich Chancellery, November 25, 1935, two page handwritten letter; Jordan asks that it be delivered to "our Führer" Adolf Hitler. (BA R58/6194/1: 191)

of the Weimar era.⁶⁹ 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 and objected that since anthroposophy represented the salvation of Germany, banning the Anthroposophical Society brought shame to the nation and was akin to what the Jews did to the Savior when they nailed him to the cross. He added: "Steiner himself showed that the Jews are a people given over to decadence of the soul."⁷⁰

In February 1936 an active member of the Hamburg branch of the Anthroposophical Society, Max Pusch, submitted a nine page typed letter to Wilhelm Frick, the Nazi Minister of Interior, protesting the ban on the Anthroposophical Society and emphasizing the pro-Nazi character of anthroposophy. He celebrated various Nazi achievements, effusively praised Hitler, and described himself as a "sincere supporter" of National Socialism. Pusch remarked that many anthroposophists, party members and otherwise, greeted the rise of the Nazis with enthusiasm, and he assured Frick that anthroposophy "fully endorses the present German state." He also relayed a first-hand anecdote about Steiner's presumed

⁶⁹ Hanns Voith, "Gesuch um Nachprüfung der Begründung des Verbots der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland betreffend" November 23, 1935, BA R58/6194/1: 201-206: "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." The document does not indicate a recipient, but Voith's post-war memoir recounts his meeting with the Minister of Justice, Franz Gürtner, in an effort to have the ban rescinded; cf. Hanns Voith, *Im Gang der Zeiten* (Tübingen: Wunderlich, 1960), 311. In contrast to his 1935 communiqué, Voith's memoir characterizes the Nazis as "fremdartig" and "Feinde des wahren Deutschtums" (ibid., 312). Voith (1885-1971) owned a machine factory in Swabia as well as several biodynamic estates, and was active in 'social threefolding' circles; he joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1919.

⁷⁰ Georg Bauer to Adolf Hitler, November 16, 1935, BA R58/6194/1: 186-187; 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."

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.”⁷¹

Further letters augmented these claims. A few days before the March 29, 1936 Reichstag election and referendum, an anthroposophist from Nuremberg announced that he while he wanted to vote for Hitler, he could not do so as long as the Anthroposophical Society remained banned.⁷² A Swiss anthroposophist and Nazi party member wrote to Hess explaining that the ban was based on misunderstanding of Steiner’s true precepts and asked that anthroposophy be rehabilitated. She included a copy of Steiner’s pamphlet on “The Germanic Soul and the German Spirit” and requested that it be delivered to Hitler.⁷³ A month later another anthroposophist party member from Naumburg in Saxony wrote to Hess decrying the dissolution of the Anthroposophical Society and avowing the compatibility of anthroposophy and Nazism.⁷⁴

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.

⁷¹ Max Pusch to Wilhelm Frick, February 29, 1936, BA R58/6194/1: 270-278: “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.

⁷² Handwritten letter from Albrecht Winter-Günther, March 25, 1936, “an die Reichsregierung, Berlin” (BA R58/6194/1: 289): “Als Mitglied der anthroposophischen Gesellschaft, begründet durch Rudolf Steiner, wäre es mir nicht möglich, meine Stimme Adolf Hitler zu geben, wie ich es dem besonderen Anlass entsprechend möchte, solange die Gesellschaft verboten ist. Ich ersuche die Reichsregierung um Aufhebung des Verbotes, dessen Begründung in jedem Punkte unrichtig war. Heil Hitler!”

⁷³ 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: 405-428.

⁷⁴ Paula Kress to Rudolf Hess, January 27, 1936, R58/6188/1: 156.

To overcome this debased spirituality, Germans must replace “abstract, Semitic thinking” with “organic, living thinking.” The most promising route toward this renewal of thinking was through anthroposophy’s “spiritual science.” The letter combined a number of anthroposophical tenets with Nazi slogans, particularly the phrase “blood and soil,” and contended that anthroposophy only wished to serve the fatherland, with head, heart and hands. (“Herz, Hirn und Hand zusammen fürs Vaterland! Dazu will Anthroposophie dienen.”) 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.”⁷⁵

These remonstrations did not overturn the ban on the Anthroposophical Society and did not persuade the anti-occultist faction in the SD and Gestapo of the value of anthroposophy. But they did reflect the views of anthroposophy’s patrons within the Nazi hierarchy. In the words of Lotar Eickhoff, for instance, anthroposophy did not have even “the slightest questionable features” and was not “in any way detrimental to the National Socialist state and its ideas.” Indeed an engagement with anthroposophy, he argued, could have “advantages for National Socialism.”⁷⁶ Hess’s perspective was described as follows: “Hess takes the position that one can think what one will of Steiner’s anthroposophical doctrine, but one should try as far as possible to

⁷⁵ Richard Dürich to Gestapo Berlin, November 28, 1935, BA R58/6193/2: 558-560: “Auch heute noch bin ich überzeugt davon, daß alle berechtigten Ziele des National-Sozialismus zu ihrem Erreichen von der geistigen Seite her dieser Anthroposophie bedürfen.” Dürich sent the letter in protest against a November 18 order forbidding further activities of the anthroposophical group he founded, the “Arbeitsgemeinschaft für deutsche Geisteswissenschaft.” For examples of his anthroposophist publications see Richard Dürich, “Ringeln um esoterisches Denken” *Die Drei* March 1929, 945-53, and Richard Dürich, “Mensch, Anthroposophie und Sozialwissenschaft” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* July 1933, 13-15.

⁷⁶ Eickhoff to Gestapo officer Karl Haselbacher, December 19, 1936, BA R58/6195/1: 421. Eickhoff and Haselbacher were both Nazi specialists in the struggle against freemasonry, but on opposite sides in the internal dispute over anthroposophy. Eickhoff’s official position was *Ministerialrat* in the Ministry of the Interior, though he often worked under Hess’s auspices. 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.

fulfill the practical usefulness of this doctrine and its working results.”⁷⁷

Anthroposophists seeking to repeal the ban also received important support from officials who deemed the Gestapo order unjustified and based on inaccurate information. An assistant secretary in the Prussian ministry of state, one of Göring’s aides, held several meetings with Jürgen von Grone in January 1936 to explore the possibility of annulling or ameliorating Heydrich’s order.⁷⁸ Even the Nazi Minister for Church Affairs, Hanns Kerrl, without demonstrating any particular sympathy for anthroposophy, complained that the Anthroposophical Society had been dissolved without his consent.⁷⁹

During the six months following the ban, anthroposophists and their allies succeeded in establishing fairly lenient parameters within which anthroposophical activities could continue in Germany without interference. Some of these successes involved support from unexpected quarters. In December 1935 Himmler forbade any action against the biodynamic farmers league.⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹ Two weeks later Heydrich ordered the

⁷⁷ Karl Wolff to Heydrich, February 15, 1937, BA R58/6195/2: 585, relaying a statement from Hess’s adjutant Leitgen: “Pg. Leitgen sagte, Herr Heß stünde auf dem Standpunkt, man könne zu der anthroposophischen Lehre von Steiner stehen wie man wolle, man solle jedoch versuchen, die praktische Verwertbarkeit und die Arbeitsergebnisse dieser Anschauung nach Möglichkeit zu verwirklichen.” Wolff was Himmler’s chief of staff.

⁷⁸ 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: 321-382. 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.

⁷⁹ Der Reichs- und Preußische Minister für die kirchlichen Angelegenheiten to Interior Minister Frick, January 31, 1936, BA R58/6194/1: 239. Kerrl insisted that minority spiritual groups like anthroposophy were part of his portfolio. While not otherwise a sympathizer of esotericism, Kerrl was outspoken in supporting anthroposophist Friedrich Rittelmeyer, head of the Christian Community; see Der Reichs- und Preußische Minister für die kirchlichen Angelegenheiten to the Reichsschrifttumskammer, May 18, 1937, BA RK/B174: 1636.

⁸⁰ Himmler’s December 4, 1935 order is in BA R58/6195/2: 519.

⁸¹ Der Reichs- und Preußische Minister für die kirchlichen Angelegenheiten to Gestapa Berlin, March 14, 1936, BA R58/5737b: 553.

Gestapo to desist from actions against the Christian Community, declaring that it was not to be dissolved, but merely subject to surveillance.⁸² 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 over their activities.⁸³

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 derided the notion of an anthroposophy without occult elements, and called for "uncompromising severity" toward all efforts to revive public forms of the movement.⁸⁴ Their strictures had limited effect, however. In early 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.⁸⁵ In 1938 restrictions on anthroposophist publishing were relaxed through the combined efforts of Alfred Baeumler and staff

⁸² Heydrich's March 28, 1936 order is in BA R58/405: 23. See also Gestapo Berlin, December 16, 1935, and April 2, 1936, BA R58/5709c: 1031 and 1036.

⁸³ The anthroposophist representatives at the May 5, 1936 meeting were Elisabeth Klein, a leader of the Waldorf school federation, Alfred Heidenreich, a leader of the Christian Community, and Erhard Bartsch, head of the biodynamic farmers league. The Interior Ministry was represented by Eickhoff, the Gestapo by Haselbacher. See the May 1936 Interior Ministry memorandum in BA R58/6194/1: 308-309; the SD report on the meeting in BA R58/6195/1: 350-351; and Werner Best to Marotzke, July 8, 1936, GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 381.

⁸⁴ September 12, 1936 SD memorandum, BA R58/6191: 312.

⁸⁵ 1936 correspondence between the Reichstheaterkammer and the Gestapo Berlin in BA R58/6190: 155-233.

members of the Propaganda Ministry.⁸⁶ A further eminent figure in the Nazi cultural bureaucracy, anthroposophist Friedrich Mahling, had lost his position by the time of the 1935 ban. For the first two years of the Third Reich he served as department head in the office of music, the *Reichsmusikkammer*.⁸⁷ Mahling remained a party member in good standing throughout the Nazi period.⁸⁸ Among rank and file anthroposophists, meanwhile, some believed 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.⁸⁹

The SD did prevail on a significant organizational question: whether former members of the Anthroposophical Society could join the Nazi party or receive civil

⁸⁶ Cf. Baeumler's "Verzeichnis der zur Freigabe vorgeschlagenen Werke Rudolf Steiners" BA NS15/303: 58331-34; Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda to Gestapo Berlin, September 22, 1938, BA R58/6192: 19; SD memorandum, March 8, 1939, BA R58/6193/1: 243; March 1936 "Denkschrift betr. den Philosophisch-anthroposophischen Verlag" R58/6194/1: 281-283; and the May 1936 correspondence from the Verlag Emil Weises Buchhandlung, BA R58/6195/1: 360-366. Karl Heinz Hederich, a high-level official in Goebbels' ministry and head of the *Parteiämliche Prüfungskommission zum Schutze des nationalsozialistischen Schrifttums*, also supported anthroposophical publishing efforts; cf. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 250-52, 296. On Ohlendorf's involvement see SD memorandum from September 23, 1938, BA R58/6192: 20, and May 5, 1938, BA R58/6220b: 97.

⁸⁷ For background on Mahling see Fred Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1982), 37, 51-53, 167-68. Mahling, an Anthroposophical Society member, was active in Nazi cultural politics from 1932 onward; in his own words, "Seit dem Jahre 1932 habe ich aktiv in der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung darinnen gestanden" (BA RK/B124: 936). He joined the Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur in 1932 and served as music critic for Goebbels' journal *Der Angriff* from 1932 to 1934. Mahling joined the Nazi party in 1933, when he was named Leiter des Presse- und Kulturamtes der Reichsmusikkammer. He was removed from this position in July 1935 after an internal intrigue led by Hans Hinkel, one of Goebbels' lieutenants, in which Mahling was held responsible for the employment of a Jewish editor in the department. In a July 2, 1935 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." (BA RK/B124: 940) Mahling subsequently appealed to party authorities and was exonerated in May 1936. See Mahling's *Reichskulturkammer* file, BA RK/B124: 907-1016, and the January 1941 SD documentation of the affair, BA R58/5563: 44, which notes Mahling's membership in the Anthroposophical Society. For a very different account of the 1935 incident see Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat*, 191-92. For an example of his anthroposophist publications see Friedrich Mahling, "Goethes 'Urworte Orphisch' und ihre Illustrierung durch Karl Thylmann" *Die Drei* January 1930, 547-49.

⁸⁸ Mahling's former superior gave him a glowing reference in November 1935, noting that "seine Haltung – auch als Nationalsozialist – war in jeder Weise einwandfrei." Der Präsident der Reichsmusikkammer, November 23, 1935, BA RK/B124: 930. Mahling was still an NSDAP member in February 1943: BA RK/B124: 970. In June 1936 he was appointed Professor of Music at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin; in 1938 he was still publishing in organs such as *Völkische Musikerziehung* (cf. Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat*, 420).

⁸⁹ April 24, 1936 report from Stuttgart Gestapo, BA R58/6193/1: 59.

service appointments. Nazi opponents of occultism argued for treating anthroposophists the same as freemasons and thus barring them from party membership.⁹⁰ Both Hess and Rosenberg supported less stringent regulations for anthroposophists.⁹¹ Bormann settled the matter by going directly to Hitler, and the policy remained that those who had previously belonged to the Anthroposophical Society could not join the party.⁹² On this basis, a series of anthroposophists who applied for party membership after 1935 were turned down, despite otherwise positive political evaluations.⁹³ There were notable exceptions to this policy, however.⁹⁴ In January 1943, for example, Hitler himself declared that Otto Thorwirth, former leader of the Gotha branch of the Anthroposophical Society, could remain a full member of

⁹⁰ SD memorandum, February 26, 1939, BA R58/6193/1: 241; "Richtlinien der NSDAP für die Behandlung ehemaliger Angehöriger von Logen und logenähnlichen Organisationen" BA R58/6144/1: 5-6.

⁹¹ Rosenberg to Hess, November 1, 1938, BA R58/6189/1: 17 and BA R58/6193/1: 188.

⁹² Bormann to SD, February 1, 1939, BA R58/6193/1: 217.

⁹³ The leader of the Anthroposophical Working Group in Gotha, Josef Schulz, 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) 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) 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). 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: 2205-2230). 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: 2139-2154) 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: 2727-2782) Hamburg anthroposophist Johannes Bertram-Pingel applied to join the party in November 1939 and was denied in May 1940. (BA PK/A315: 677-688) 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 Weidener applied to join the party in 1938 and was rejected because of his previous membership in the Anthroposophical Society. (BA PK/N73: 2613-2618) According to his own account, Erhard Bartsch tried repeatedly to join the party, without success, despite support from Hess (BA R58/6223/1: 303).

⁹⁴ In June 1937 Swiss anthroposophist and NSDAP member Anni Müller-Link received permission from party authorities to continue as an active member of the General Anthroposophical Society. (BA R58/6193/1: 13) 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: 2651-2684); an October 1941 evaluation from the Schweinfurt *Kreisleiter* remarked on Feyh's active interest in party affairs and his generous contributions to party causes. Feyh also served in the Wehrmacht from August 1939 to July 1940.

the NSDAP.⁹⁵ But the rule equating anthroposophist groups with freemasonic organizations sometimes meant that even committed anthroposophical Nazis were not allowed to remain in the party. The case of August Wegfraß, an active member of the Anthroposophical Society from 1912 onward and one of the leading anthroposophists in Erfurt in the 1930s, was a salient example. Wegfraß first applied to join the NSDAP in May 1937 and quickly became an energetic participant in local party affairs, occupying several minor offices and giving lectures for the party.⁹⁶ 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 1940 and in January 1942.⁹⁷ Despite emphatic support from the local and regional party leadership and even the *Gauleiter* of Thuringia, Fritz Sauckel, Wegfraß was definitively rejected in October 1942.⁹⁸

Expulsion from the party did not necessarily mean an end to anthroposophist service to the national community; Steiner's followers continued to fulfill a variety of public functions in Nazi Germany.⁹⁹ But it did reflect the precarious state of occult tendencies aspiring to partake in the National Socialist cause. As Hitler announced at the 1938 Reichsparteitag: "The creeping entry into our movement of mystically

⁹⁵ BA PK/R14: 2786. Thorwirth had belonged to the party since at least 1934, while serving as head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Gotha: R 58/6188/1: 318.

⁹⁶ Wegfraß particularly impressed his *Kreisleiter* and was made a *Blockhelfer* in August 1938 and then *Blockleiter*. His party correspondence file is in BA PK/N64: 1539-1570. For his chronology of the dispute surrounding his party membership see BA OPGA/J105: 232-234; the full party court file concerning his case is BA OPGA/J105: 219-254.

⁹⁷ See e.g. August Wegfraß to the Gauleitung der NSDAP, Abteilung für Gnadensachen, December 7, 1940, BA OPGA/J105: 232.

⁹⁸ For Sauckel's support see Der Gauleiter Thüringen to the Kanzlei des Führers, February 17, 1941, BA OPGA/J105: 226. Wegfraß also 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)

⁹⁹ Wolfgang Schuchhardt taught at the *Institut für Volkskunstforschung* at the University of Berlin, while Friedrich Böhnlein taught at a Luftwaffe school in Nuremberg, training the NS-Fliegerkorps. A May 1941 SD report noted that the former head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Speyer, Wilhelm Weber, was a "Hauptlehrer an der Staatserziehungsanstalt" (BA R58/5660: 13).

inclined occult investigators of the hereafter must not be tolerated. They are not National Socialists; they have nothing to do with us.”¹⁰⁰ Anthroposophists responded to this inhospitable atmosphere by downplaying the esoteric facets of their doctrine and advertising their scientific and philosophical credentials, and by presenting their practical activities as contributions to the common good of the nation. To the chagrin of Nazi officials dedicated to rooting out creeping 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.¹⁰¹ In spite of serious setbacks, many anthroposophists had managed to accommodate themselves to the Third Reich. The prospect 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 organized grouping of Steiner’s followers in Germany, with roughly 6000 members in 1935, was the Christian Community headed by Friedrich Rittelmeyer. Initiated in 1922 as a “movement for religious renewal,” the group aimed to bridge confessional divides through anthroposophy’s unconventional understanding of Christianity. Within a

¹⁰⁰ Hitler’s September 6, 1938 speech on culture at the NSDAP Parteitag, quoted in RSHA report “Bericht. Betr.: Aktion gegen Geheimlehren und sogenannte Geheimwissenschaften” (BA R58/6197/1: 19): “Das Einschleichen mystisch veranlagter okkultler Jenseitsforscher darf daher in der Bewegung nicht geduldet werden. Sie sind nicht Nationalsozialisten, [sondern] etwas, was mit uns nicht zu tun hat.”

¹⁰¹ SD dispatch to Walter Buch, Chief Justice of the Nazi Party Court, July 24, 1940, BA R58/6189/1: 115.

decade the Christian Community had congregations in several dozens cities and towns, and its seminary was established in Stuttgart in 1933. Through its own priests and sacraments, the group offers a formal religious expression of anthroposophical spirituality.¹⁰² Its teachings and practices incorporate a blend of esoteric and biblical influences. While the background of the founding leadership was overwhelmingly Protestant, the Christian Community has consistently 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.¹⁰³ Rittelmeyer and his colleagues gave them little opportunity to do so. 1936 police reports on Christian Community gatherings consistently observed nothing objectionable or improper and concluded that there were no reasons for concern.¹⁰⁴ The reports became more critical in subsequent years,

¹⁰² Overviews of the Christian Community are available in Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1611-76, and Ahern, *Sun at Midnight*, 80-83. For internal accounts see Hans-Werner Schroeder, *Die Christengemeinschaft – Entstehung, Entwicklung, Zielsetzung* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 2001); Rudolf Gädeke, *Die Gründer der Christengemeinschaft* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag am Goetheanum, 1992); Rudolf Frieling, *Christentum und Wiederverkörperung* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1974); Emil Bock, *Katholizismus, Protestantismus, Christengemeinschaft* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1940); Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Was will die Christengemeinschaft?* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1928).

¹⁰³ 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) In contrast, an earlier SD report on the group, from September 1935, concluded that its leaders' public statements were “in keiner Weise zu beanstanden” (BA R58/5709c: 1086).

¹⁰⁴ See the series of detailed 1936 reports in BA R58/5709c: 1092-1107. A thorough Gestapo report from October 12, 1935 on the Christian Community in Stettin encapsulated both anthroposophist views of Nazism and Nazi views of anthroposophy, summarizing the perspective of Christian Community members thus: “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,

but still recommended taking no action against the group.¹⁰⁵ A faction within the Christian Community led by Gertrud Spörri, one of the 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.¹⁰⁶ Rittelmeyer had been a nationally respected Protestant minister before becoming an anthroposophist and was able to parlay his personal and political reliability into a measure of protection for the group until his death in 1938.¹⁰⁷

The Christian Community fared relatively well compared to other small religious groups in Nazi Germany, enduring for the first eight and a half years of Hitler's twelve year reign.¹⁰⁸ In some respects the group prospered during the Nazi period, experiencing a growth in membership and opening its first proprietary church

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

¹⁰⁵ For example, Gestapa Berlin, June 24, 1937: "Zu staatspolitischen Maßnahmen gegen die Sekte 'Christengemeinschaft' besteht zur Zeit keine Veranlassung." BA R58/5709c: 1051

¹⁰⁶ According to former Christian Community member Gerda Walther, after leaving the group Gertrud Spörri said of Nazism: "Dr. Steiner habe vorausgesagt, daß in Deutschland eine Diktatur kommen werde, es sei dies also eine 'notwendige Entwicklungsstufe', und man müsse sie folglich bejahen." Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer* (Remagen: Reichl, 1960), 501.

¹⁰⁷ Few works address Rittelmeyer's career during the Third Reich in detail. The best of these is "Zwischen Annäherung und Distanz: Friedrich Rittelmeyer und das 'Dritte Reich'," chapter three in Claudia Becker's dissertation "Versuche religiöser Erneuerung in der Moderne am Beispiel des evangelischen Theologen Friedrich Rittelmeyer (1872-1938)" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 2001). See also the considerably less informed essays by Lutz Becht, "Deutschlands religiöser Weltberuf: Friedrich Rittelmeyers 'Deutschtum'" and "Die Christengemeinschaft und die Christliche Wissenschaft (Christian Science) in Frankfurt am Main im Nationalsozialismus" in Lutz Becht, Hermann Düringer, and Ansgar Koschel, eds., *Rückkehr zur völkischen Religion? Glaube und Nation im Nationalsozialismus und Heute* (Frankfurt: Haag + Herchen, 2003), 132-54 and 206-20. Becht describes Rittelmeyer's conception of Germanness as "unpolitisch" (216), and his survey of Rittelmeyer's ethnic and racial views has an inadvertently apologetic character. 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. For an indication of Rittelmeyer's conservative nationalist outlook see his 1934 book *Deutschtum*, published by the Christian Community, as well as his 1921 book *Rudolf Steiner und das Deutschtum*.

¹⁰⁸ Becht, "Die Christengemeinschaft und die Christliche Wissenschaft (Christian Science) in Frankfurt am Main im Nationalsozialismus," 218, reports that Christian Science was "ungleich härter getroffen" than the Christian Community was by Nazi measures against small religious groups.

building in 1936 in Dresden.¹⁰⁹ More Christian Community churches followed in Cologne in 1938 and Stuttgart in 1939. By June 1939 there were 79 congregations throughout the expanded Reich.¹¹⁰ Christian Community leaders readily announced their acceptance of the Nazi regime, stating repeatedly: “The Christian Community recognizes the National Socialist state.”¹¹¹ They also noted that “there are many party members in our membership.”¹¹² These claims, raised both before and after the November 1935 ban on the Anthroposophical Society, reflected more than tactful acknowledgement of the political climate. There were substantive points of contact between Nazi ideology and Christian Community thinking, particularly around the issues of Germany’s national mission and of the deleterious effects of Judaism.¹¹³

Such affinities, at times ambivalent and indistinct, were not a protective anthroposophist response to the Nazi state; they were evident for years before Hitler came to power. Christian Community spokespeople had long placed a central emphasis on overcoming Jewish elements within German religious and spiritual life. This stance had practical impact, but one which differed fundamentally from Nazi

¹⁰⁹ On the church in Dresden, the first built by the Christian Community, see Gerhard Klein, “Von der Dresdener Gemeinde und ihrem Bau” *Mitteilungen aus der Christengemeinschaft* March 1937, 2-3. Plans for construction began in 1934. Gerhard Klein was the pastor of the Christian Community congregation in Dresden and husband of Elisabeth Klein, leader of the Dresden Waldorf school.

¹¹⁰ “Verzeichnis der Gemeinden und Stützpunkte der Christengemeinschaft” supplement to *Mitteilungen aus der Christengemeinschaft* June 1939.

¹¹¹ “Die Christengemeinschaft anerkennt den nationalsozialistischen Staat.” The sentence appears in several documents, including the signed transcript of an October 1935 police interview with Otto Francke, pastor of the Christian Community congregation in Jena (BA R58/5709c: 1071), and a Christian Community flyer distributed in 1936 (BA R58/6189/2: 147).

¹¹² “Unter den Mitgliedern sind viele Parteigenossen.” The sentence once again appears in both BA R58/5709c: 1071 and BA R58/6189/2: 147.

¹¹³ One of the Christian Community’s founders, Johannes Werner Klein, later became a zealous Nazi, breaking with Steiner’s followers in the process. 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 then 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.

attitudes. For Steiner's followers, "the Jews must become Christians!"¹¹⁴ Well before the rise of Nazism, anthroposophists were particularly piqued by the suggestion that Jews were amply represented in their ranks. In the pages of the Christian Community journal in February 1929, Rittelmeyer noted that "conspicuously few Jews" were members of the Anthroposophical Society.¹¹⁵ In 1932 Rittelmeyer disdained the "Jewish spirit" behind such un-German phenomena as "internationalism and pacifism."¹¹⁶ The same year his Christian Community colleague August Pauli associated the Jews with the "disintegrating effects of intellectualism and materialism."¹¹⁷ Rittelmeyer himself linked the Jews to "the egoistic-intellectualistic-materialist spirit."¹¹⁸ He taught that it was the special task of the Germanic peoples to overcome this spirit.

The emphasis on "overcoming" purportedly Jewish aspects of Christianity runs throughout Christian Community publications from the Nazi era. Rittelmeyer's articles and books regularly contrasted "the Jews" to "the Germans" and portrayed Jews as a people in decline, "decadent" and "degenerate" and out of step with spiritual evolution. However, "the individual Jew," if especially insightful, could "work his way out of his race."¹¹⁹ In order to cleanse Christianity of its Jewish residues, "a great

¹¹⁴ "Die Juden sollen Christen werden!" Christian Community founding member Walter Gradenwitz quoted in Gädeke, *Die Gründer der Christengemeinschaft*, 353. Of the 48 principal founding members of the Christian Community, Gradenwitz was the only one with any Jewish background. He was born and raised Protestant, as his family had converted a generation earlier.

¹¹⁵ Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Der Mord an dem Anthroposophen Dr. Unger" *Die Christengemeinschaft* February 1929, 347: "Die Anthroposophische Gesellschaft hat, wie das gegenüber bekannten Verunglimpfungen einmal festgestellt werden mag, ganz unverhältnismäßig wenig Juden in ihren Reihen. In keiner Gesellschaft, die Rassen- und Konfessionsunterschiede nicht macht, wird man so auffallend wenig Juden finden wie gerade in der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft."

¹¹⁶ Rittelmeyer, *Der Deutsche in seiner Weltaufgabe zwischen Rußland und Amerika*, 4. See also Rittelmeyer's 1928 remarks on "Semitic" and "Aryan" features in Rittelmeyer, *Meine Lebensbegegnung mit Rudolf Steiner*, 74-75.

¹¹⁷ Pauli, *Blut und Geist*, 29.

¹¹⁸ Rittelmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner als Führer zu neuem Christentum*, 84. 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).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 83. Rittelmeyer also wrote that overcoming the unfortunate Jewish residues in Christianity was "die Aufgabe des Deutschtums." (85) See also Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Die religiöse Bewegung im

act of purification” was needed, and the Germans were the people best suited to carry it out.¹²⁰ Rittelmeyer’s successor as head of the Christian Community, Emil Bock, charged the Jews with “national egoism” and called on the Germans not to make the mistake the Jews did, but to fulfill the German cosmic mission and bring enlightenment and redemption to the world.¹²¹ In a 1934 article in the Christian Community journal, Rittelmeyer declared that Jews today embody “corrosive criticism and impotent dialectic” and above all “materialism, intellectualism, egoism.”¹²² Surmounting this malignant influence would require elevating the “race question” into a “spiritual question.” A June 1936 lecture by the Christian Community pastor from Leipzig 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.”¹²³ Another member of the group told the Gestapo in August 1939 that the

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.

¹²⁰ 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) Esoteric variations on traditional Christian prejudices about Judaism resurfaced in such texts; cf. Gottfried Richter, “Von der Begegnung der germanischen Volksseele mit Christus” *Die Christengemeinschaft* May 1935, 48: “Da waren die Juden, dieses Volk, das sich fühlte als das auserwählte. Aber es trug diese Auserwählung nicht mehr als eine große heilige Aufgabe an der Welt, nur noch als ein kleines selbstsüchtiges Recht auf die Welt. Sie konnten es nicht ertragen, daß da einer aufstand und von der freien Gotteskindschaft der Menschen aus dem Geiste sprach.” See also Richter, *Die Germanen als Wegbahner eines kosmischen Christentums*, 50.

¹²¹ Emil Bock, *Das Alte Testament und die Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit* vol. III (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1936), 294.

¹²² Friedrich Rittelmeyer, “Judentum und Christentum” *Die Christengemeinschaft* January 1934, 291-98, quotes on 293. The article argues that the ancient Hebrews had a profound mission, but this mission was fulfilled two thousand years ago. The Jews were already long since in decline by the time of Christ’s appearance; Jews since then are mired in legalism, pedantry, rigid tradition, dogmatism, and abstraction. Rittelmeyer presents Christ’s struggle as a struggle against the Jews, and calls for “die Erhebung der Rassenfrage zur Geistesfrage” (296), which will help the Jews understand and enter into the necessary overcoming of Jewishness.

¹²³ June 8, 1936 report from the Polizeipräsidium Dresden on the Pentecost meeting of the Christian Community, quoting the presentation by Leipzig Christian Community pastor Peter Müller: “Das

Christian Community was the only Christian denomination that had “cast off the remnants of Jewish origin” and had thus become “the sole truly German form of Christianity.”¹²⁴

Christian Community representatives welcomed the Nazi notion of “positive Christianity” as a significant advance in German religious and political life.¹²⁵ With this achievement, they declared, Nazism had made it possible to be both a German patriot and a Christian.¹²⁶ They also celebrated the return of Germany to its rightful “stature and honor” under National Socialist auspices. One prominent leader of the group, Alfred Heidenreich, argued that National Socialism would not be able to overcome materialism unless it availed itself of anthroposophy’s assistance.¹²⁷ In such instances 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 paragraph-long excerpts from the *Völkischer Beobachter* and shared

jüdische Gesetz unterdrückte jeden Drang nach Freiheit. Es bewirkte aber eine starke intellektuelle Ausprägung. Auf der anderen Seite bewirkte es, daß die Welt ihre Lebendigkeit und Farbigkeit verlor. Der Weg ging nur durch Gebot und Verbot.” (BA R58/5709c: 1097) The police observer emphasized that he had no concerns or criticisms about the presentations at the gathering.

¹²⁴ SD report quoting an unnamed Christian Community member identified simply as a “high-level civil servant” in an August 1939 statement to the Gestapo, BA R58/5563: 136.

¹²⁵ Point 24 in the 1920 Nazi party program read: “Wir fordern die Freiheit aller religiöser Bekenntnisse im Staat, soweit sie nicht dessen Bestand gefährden oder gegen das Sittlichkeits- und Moralgefühl der germanischen Rasse verstoßen. Die Partei als solche vertritt den Standpunkt eines positiven Christentums, ohne sich konfessionell an ein bestimmtes Bekenntnis zu binden. Sie bekämpft den jüdisch-materialistischen Geist in und außer uns und ist überzeugt, daß eine dauerhafte Genesung unseres Volkes nur erfolgen kann von innen heraus auf der Grundlage: Gemeinnutz vor Eigennutz.” For background on “positive Christianity” see Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and the special issue of *Journal of Contemporary History* 42 (2007) devoted to critical discussion of the book, as well as Doris Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

¹²⁶ *Die Christengemeinschaft* February 1936, 346: “Wir stehen auf dem Boden des heutigen Staates, wenn auch unsre spezielle Aufgabe nicht das Politische, sondern das Religiöse ist, das wieder seine eigenen Gesetze hat. Und auch unser Herz schlägt hoch, wenn Deutschland heute wieder mit Haltung und Würde im Kreise der Völker steht.” With the Nazi revolution, it is now possible to combine true German loyalty and true Christianity “in dem auf dem Boden positiven Christentums stehenden nationalsozialistischen Staat.”

¹²⁷ Alfred Heidenreich, March 27, 1936, reporting his meeting with Gestapo officer Haselbacher, in Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. IV, 30.

passages from Houston Stewart Chamberlain with its readers.¹²⁸ It endorsed Nazi invective against Russian Communism and labeled Bolsheviks “sub-human.”¹²⁹ On some occasions the periodical praised fascist and antisemitic movements in other parts of Europe.¹³⁰

After the 1935 suppression of the Anthroposophical Society, Christian Community leaders took particular pains to demonstrate their amicable attitude toward the Nazi government. The lengths to which the Christian Community was willing to go in converging with Nazi ideals can be seen from a December 1935 document submitted to the Gestapo and other top agencies in the party and the state.¹³¹ The document explained that the Christian Community arose after 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 today the time has come for the German spirit to claim its world-historical role, for the salvation not

¹²⁸ See e.g. *Die Christengemeinschaft* January 1938, 278, with excerpts from Chamberlain’s *Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. A very positive portrait of Chamberlain and an extended quote from him can also be found in Caroline von Heydebrand, “Lebensbegegnungen” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* February 1935, 3. Cf. Rittelmeyer’s section on “Volk und Blut” in *Rudolf Steiner als Führer zu neuem Christentum*, 77-90. Rittelmeyer nonetheless demanded an even more firmly German outlook: “Vieles, was heute sich regt, ist nicht deutsch *genug*, ist nicht germanisch *genug*.” (Rittelmeyer, “Über Christentum und Germanentum,” 206)

¹²⁹ Hermann Heisler, “Antibolschewistische Schau” *Die Christengemeinschaft* December 1936, 287-88, praising the anti-Bolshevik Nazi propaganda exhibition in Munich. See also Friedrich Rittelmeyer, “Heidentum und Christentum” *Die Christengemeinschaft* November 1935, 227-32; he argues that Germany has the task of defeating Bolshevism, which won’t be possible without violence, and attributes this stance to Steiner as well.

¹³⁰ Kurt von Wistinghausen, “Legion des Erzengel Michael” *Die Christengemeinschaft* February 1941, 174-75, offers a decidedly sympathetic posthumous portrait of Romanian fascist leader Corneliu Codreanu and of his political organizations, the violently antisemitic Legion of the Archangel Michael and the Iron Guard.

¹³¹ “Denkschrift über die Christengemeinschaft” dated Stuttgart, December 1935, an 11 page typescript signed by Friedrich Rittelmeyer “für die Christengemeinschaft,” BA R58/5737b: 564-574. Rittelmeyer submitted a copy to the Gestapo in January 1936, with a cover letter explaining that it had been sent to “die höchsten Stellen des Staats und der Partei”; see Rittelmeyer to Gestapa Berlin, January 8, 1936, BA R58/5737b: 360.

only of Germany but of all humanity.”¹³² The 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 “sects” and “all forms of inscrutable occultism.” These phenomena were “imported from the West” and unsuited to German spirituality. Insisting that the entire leadership of the movement had always been “purely Aryan,” the document forcefully rebuffed the notion of any “Jewish influence” on the Christian Community.¹³³ It denounced “individualist and liberal tendencies” for corroding the German national community while boasting of the group’s own longstanding service in the battle against Bolshevism.¹³⁴ The document announced that anthroposophical spirituality represented “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 dispensation in tune 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. An SD report filed two months after the invasion of Poland left no doubt that Heydrich’s agents considered the Christian Community definitively

¹³² *Denkschrift über die Christengemeinschaft*, 3: “dass heute für den deutschen Geist die weltgeschichtliche Stunde gekommen ist – zum Heil nicht nur Deutschlands, sondern der ganzen Menschheit.” In the current historical period, it continued, “dem germanisch-deutschen Geist gerade die wichtigsten Aufgaben zufallen.”

¹³³ “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.

¹³⁴ “Auch im früheren deutschen Staat hat die Christengemeinschaft die drohende Weltgefahr des Bolschewismus scharf gesehen und mit geistigen Waffen fortdauernd bekämpft.” *Denkschrift über die Christengemeinschaft*, 9.

irreconcilable with Nazi ideology.¹³⁵ As with other anthroposophical protestations of loyalty to the Nazi state, the Christian Community's frequently proclaimed commitment to Germany's mission, authentic as it may have been, was insufficient. 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, when most anthroposophical projects were finally shut down, along with many other esoteric tendencies. The Christian Community was dissolved by Gestapo order in July 1941.¹³⁶

Implacable foes in the security services were not the only threat anthroposophists faced during the Third Reich. They were challenged by rival minority spiritual groups such as the Ludendorffers, who saw Steiner as a Jew and a Freemason.¹³⁷ Much of the chemical industry fiercely opposed the organic methods of biodynamic farming and attempted to discredit the movement as occultist charlatanry.¹³⁸ Pharmaceutical companies tried to shut down the Weleda enterprises in 1943; they were saved by Ohlendorf's intervention.¹³⁹ These incidents indicate both

¹³⁵ November 6, 1939 SD report on a Christian Community public lecture in Kassel, BA R58/5705: 921. The audience comprised approximately 80 listeners "aus Kreisen des sogen. gehobenen Bürgertums," mostly older women. The report concluded that while the content of the lecture was extremely confused, it clearly represented "eine absolute Verneinung und Ablehnung der nationalsozialistischen Ideologie."

¹³⁶ The July 25, 1941 order dissolving the Christian Community is in BA R58/405: 62. The group's journal had already ceased publication a month earlier; the last page of the final issue (*Die Christengemeinschaft* vol. 18 no. 3, June 1941, p. 48) carried a "Mitteilung an die Leser" explaining: "Am 9. Mai empfangen wir einen Erlaß der Reichspressekammer, wonach unsere Zeitschrift vom 1. Juni ab – gleichzeitig mit vielen anderen – ihr Erscheinen einstellen muß." The reason for suspending publication was the wartime economy; printing resources were needed for "kriegswichtige Zwecke."

¹³⁷ Anthroposophists, for their part, accused the Ludendorffers of Jewish tendencies. Marie Steiner attacked them as "dogmatics of the old Jahwe principle" whose doctrines were "thoroughly old testament" and unsuited to modern times, ensnared in "anachronistic service to Jahwe." See "Der Kampf um Christus. Einleitende Worte von Marie Steiner" in Rudolf Steiner, *Der Christus-Impuls und die Entwicklung des Ich-Bewußtseins* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1933), vii-viii. Karl Heise denounced "der jüdisch versippte Ludendorff – seine Gemahlin ist Jüdin" for playing into the hands of Germany's enemies; Heise, *Der katholische Ansturm wider den Okkultismus*, 38.

¹³⁸ See e.g. Alfred Steven, "Stellungnahme zur Frage: Biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise" BA R3602/2609.

¹³⁹ Cf. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 360.

the promise and the peril that seemed to derive from anthroposophical ideas put into practice under the aegis of Nazism. Two such endeavors that took shape after 1933, the re-organization of anthroposophical medicine and biodynamic agriculture, reveal the complicated and contradictory dynamics at work.

Anthroposophical Medicine and the 'New German Art of Healing'

In August 1933 Rudolf Hess established a new 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 health care and medicine, or the “people’s health,” *Volksgesundheit* in Nazi parlance.¹⁴⁰ Among other fields, it had responsibility for “natural healing” and “racial hygiene.” Hess named party member Hanns Georg Müller, a prominent *Lebensreform* advocate, to promote and coordinate “reform movements” within health care.¹⁴¹ Müller was among the earliest members of the Nazi movement and a strong backer of biodynamics. In 1934 the Rudolf Hess Hospital opened in Dresden as a center for alternative medical practices.¹⁴² Hess also created a Main Office for Public Health, the *Hauptamt für Volksgesundheit* headed by Nazi stalwart Dr. Gerhard Wagner, whose title was *Reichsärztführer*, leader of the German medical profession.¹⁴³ Hess, Müller and Wagner were avid supporters of alternative

¹⁴⁰ The “Sachverständigenbeirat für Volksgesundheit bei der Reichsleitung der NSDAP” was established on August 21, 1933. See Hess’s “Bekanntmachung” in *Der Heilpraktiker* September 15, 1933, 2. See also the summary “Sachverständigenbeirat für Volksgesundheit bei der Reichsleitung der NSDAP” *Der Heilpraktiker* December 1, 1933, 11-12, for an overview of its structure and work, and “Arbeitstagung des Sachverständigenbeirats für Volksgesundheit” *Der Heilpraktiker* April 1934, 10-16.

¹⁴¹ 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 own 1975 affidavit in Gilbhard, *Die Thule-Gesellschaft*, 243-47. His publishing house, the Müllersche Verlagshandlung, produced several works by anthroposophist authors.

¹⁴² “Rudolf-Heß-Krankenhaus in Dresden” *Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden* June 1934, 8-9. Cf. Alfred Haug, “Das Rudolf-Heß-Krankenhaus in Dresden” in Fridolf Kudlien, ed., *Ärzte im Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1985), 138-45.

¹⁴³ For background see Michael Kater, “Die ‘Gesundheitsführung’ des Deutschen Volkes” *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 18 (1983), 349-75; Hans Stoffels, “Die Gesundheitsutopie der Medizin im Nationalsozialismus” *Sozialpsychiatrische Informationen* 13 (1983), 55-67; Michael Kater, *Doctors under Hitler* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Norbert Frei, ed., *Medizin und*

medicine and used their positions to encourage a variety of unorthodox approaches in holistic and natural health care, including anthroposophical medicine and nutrition.¹⁴⁴ The entwining 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.¹⁴⁵

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.¹⁴⁶ The medical approach outlined by Steiner was founded on his teachings about "occult physiology" and the karmic origins of disease; it frowns on vaccination and standard therapies which do not address the spiritual sources of health and illness.¹⁴⁷ Its practitioners view external

Gesundheitspolitik in der NS-Zeit (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1991). An overview of Nazi health agencies and personnel is available in Hans Reiter, *Ziele und Wege des Reichsgesundheitsamtes im Dritten Reich* (Leipzig: Barth, 1936), 116-20.

¹⁴⁴ See 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; Doris Kratz, *Die Heilkunde in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik - Die 'angepaßte' Medizin in der Zeit der NS-Diktatur* (Berlin: Trafo, 2004); Walter Wuttko-Groneberg, "Nationalsozialistische Medizin: Volks- und Naturheilkunde auf 'neuen Wegen'" in Heinz Abholz, ed., *Alternative Medizin* (Berlin: Argument, 1983), 27-50; Lars Sievert, *Naturheilkunde und Medizinethik im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Mabuse-Verlag, 1996).

¹⁴⁵ The lack of any systematic study of the topic may be traced in part to the paucity of primary sources. Archival sources appear to be lacking even for larger organizations such as the Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für eine Neue Deutsche Heilkunde; 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. Haug also reports that both the Gesellschaft Anthroposophischer Ärzte and Weleda told him that they had no records whatsoever on anthroposophist doctors in the 1930s; cf. *ibid.*, 104 and 170. A recent promising start toward a fuller account of anthroposophical medicine in the Nazi era is available in the thoughtful study by 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 a historiographically unsatisfactory 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.

¹⁴⁶ For an anthroposophist account from the Nazi era see the chapter "Goethes Erkenntnisweg und seine Vollendung durch Rudolf Steiner" in Friedrich Husemann, *Goethe und die Heilkunst* (Dresden: Emil Weise, 1936), 151-59.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Rudolf Steiner, *An Occult Physiology* (London: Collison, 1932); Steiner, *Manifestations of Karma* (London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing, 1936); Steiner, *The Anthroposophical Approach to Medicine* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1951); Steiner, *The Healing Process: Spirit, Nature and our*

symptoms as manifestations of underlying cosmic forces and evolutionary needs, consider the destiny and reincarnational path of each patient as central elements in diagnosis and treatment, and see healing as an effort to return the human organism to its proper equilibrium. Pathologies are examined not just through the physical body but through the etheric body and the astral body as well. Anthroposophist physicians are trained medical doctors whose treatments form a type of complementary medicine, a combination of conventional and alternative practices, with an emphasis on homeopathic therapies. They are thus distinguished from lay healers as well as from mainstream doctors, and base their approach on Steiner's esoteric tenets.¹⁴⁸

Weleda medications and pharmaceutical products grew out of this framework. Anthroposophist doctors in the 1920s and 1930s frequently recommended biodynamic methods and materials, including Weleda treatments, as part of a comprehensive health regimen. Along with their holistic orientation, their non-invasive therapeutic approach, and their critique of the 'materialist' assumptions of mainstream health care, these factors brought them together with other practitioners of natural medicine under Nazi sponsorship after 1933. 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.

Bodies (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 2000); Rudolf Steiner and Ita Wegman, *Fundamentals of Therapy: An Extension of the Art of Healing through Spiritual Knowledge* (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Company, 1925); L. F. C. Mees, *Blessed by Illness* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1983); Michaela Glöckler, ed., *Medizin an der Schwelle: Erkenntnisringen, Liebe als Heilkraft, Schicksalsgestaltung* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 1993); Volker Fintelmann, *Intuitive Medizin: Anthroposophische Medizin in der Praxis* (Stuttgart: Hippokrates., 2007).

¹⁴⁸ 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. Jütte's basic survey of the topic is informative, but its historical sections are in some cases inaccurate. His account of anthroposophist medicine during the Third Reich is based on post-war anthroposophical sources and portrays the movement as a victim of National Socialism (251-52), while his earlier section on "Die 'Neue Deutsche Heilkunde'" (42-55) makes no mention of anthroposophist medicine. For an anthroposophical account until the year 1925 see Peter Selg, "Kurze Skizze der Geschichte anthroposophischer Medizin" in Selg, ed., *Anthroposophische Ärzte*, 25-76.

Josef Schulz from Gotha.¹⁴⁹ With the assistance of Hess, Wagner, Müller and other Nazi officials, anthroposophist medicine became one of the central constituents of the so-called *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde*, the ‘New German Art of Healing,’ a Nazi umbrella category for alternative medical practices, between 1933 and 1939.¹⁵⁰

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.”¹⁵¹ Its main institutional framework, the *Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für eine Neue Deutsche Heilkunde* or Reich Committee for a New German Art of Healing, was founded in Nuremberg in May 1935 with Wagner’s protégé Karl Kötschau as its head.¹⁵² It comprised seven corporate members, including the chief associations of homeopathic and naturopathic physicians as well as practitioners of various water cures. One of the seven founding organizational members was the league of anthroposophist doctors, the *Vereinigung anthroposophischer Ärzte*, whose leader was Dr. Friedrich Husemann.¹⁵³ The anthroposophical doctors association remained a

¹⁴⁹ Cf. “Die Tagung der deutschen Naturärzte” *Der Heilpraktiker* December 15, 1934, 12; “Tagungsbericht der Hauptversammlung der Naturärzte im Rudolf-Heß-Krankenhaus, Dresden, am 24./25. November” *Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden* December 1934, 20-21.

¹⁵⁰ Histories of the ‘New German Art of Healing’ can be found in Haug, *Die Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für eine Neue Deutsche Heilkunde*; Bothe, *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde*; Kratz, *Heilkunde in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik*; Uwe Heyll, *Wasser, Fasten, Luft und Licht: Die Geschichte der Naturheilkunde in Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2006), 229-69; 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; Ernst Klee, *Deutsche Medizin im Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2001), 50-53.

¹⁵¹ 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. On the “affinities between natural healing and National Socialism” see Bothe, *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde*, 291-99.

¹⁵² For a positive anthroposophical reference to Kötschau see Husemann, *Goethe und die Heilkunst*, 46, which cites Kötschau and characterizes his views as similar to Husemann’s own. For background on Kötschau, a chief spokesperson for ‘organic medicine’ or ‘biological medicine’ in the Nazi period, see Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 164-65, 230-35; Weindling, *Health, race, and German politics*, 536-37; Kater, *Doctors under Hitler*, 61-62, 227-29; Fritzen, *Gesünder Leben*, 104-05, 305-08; Heyll, *Wasser, Fasten, Luft und Licht*, 233-38, 265-69; Kudlien, ed., *Ärzte im Nationalsozialismus*, 131-38.

¹⁵³ Friedrich Husemann (1887-1959), a follower of Steiner since 1909, was one of the central figures in anthroposophical medicine. For biographical details see Selg, ed., *Anthroposophische Ärzte*, 140-48.

member of the Reich Committee for a New German Art of Healing throughout the Committee's existence, changing its name to the league for biodynamic healing, *Verband für biologisch-dynamische Heilweise*, after the dissolution of the Anthroposophical Society in November 1935. Within the framework of the 'New German Healing' anthroposophist doctors participated centrally in the campaign to make alternative medicine a vital part of Nazi health policy. They received extensive support from Müller's department in the *Reichsleitung* of the party and the Main Office for Public Health.¹⁵⁴

Anthroposophical medicine also had the backing of Julius Streicher, *Gauleiter* of Franconia and propagandist of radical antisemitism.¹⁵⁵ Streicher was a rival of Wagner's for leadership of alternative health tendencies within the Nazi movement, and was a particularly fervent opponent of immunization. His publication *Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden* provided positive coverage of anthroposophist health efforts on several occasions. In one instance, 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."¹⁵⁶ Anthroposophist contributions to the 'New German Art of Healing'

His major work is Friedrich Husemann, *Das Bild des Menschen als Grundlage der Heilkunst: Entwurf einer geisteswissenschaftlich orientierten Medizin* (Dresden: Emil Weise, 1941).

¹⁵⁴ See the extensive 1934-1940 correspondence from Hanns Georg Müller and the Sachverständigenbeirat für Volksgesundheit bei der Reichsleitung der NSDAP, and the comparatively sparse 1935 correspondence from *Reichsärzteführer* Wagner and the Hauptamt für Volksgesundheit, in BA R9349/1. Wagner's "Sachbearbeiter für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise" was Bernhard Hörmann, an NSDAP member since 1920 who held the positions of Reichsamtsleiter im Hauptamt für Volksgesundheit and Mitarbeiter des Sachberaters für Volksgesundheit im Stab des Stellvertreters des Führers. Hörmann's superiors described him as "ein vorbildlicher Nationalsozialist." (BA PK/E282: 404) His ample correspondence from 1935 onward in BA R9349/1 shows him to be an eager and assertive supporter of biodynamics.

¹⁵⁵ The biodynamic farmers league also sought and gained Streicher's support; see Gauleitung Franken to Erhard Bartsch, February 11, 1938, BA R9349/3/S.

¹⁵⁶ "Tagung der Naturärzte in Würzburg am 2. und 3. Juni 1934" *Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden* June 1934, 18. The title of Husemann's presentation is given as "Die Dreigliederung des menschlichen Organismus." Wilhelm Pelikan (1893-1981) became a personal student of Steiner's in

garnered favorable attention in mainstream medical journals as well.¹⁵⁷ The Reich Committee for a New German Art of Healing was disbanded in January 1937 after pressure by the medical establishment, and Wagner died in March 1939, but this did not spell the end of anthroposophy's involvement in National Socialist health measures.¹⁵⁸ One of the primary sessions at the July 1938 conference sponsored by the Nazi party's Main Office for Public Health, in addition to appearances by Streicher and Müller, was a presentation by leading anthroposophist and biodynamic representative Franz Dreidax, described as a "high point" of the entire event.¹⁵⁹ Wagner's successor as *Reichsärzteführer*, Dr. Leonardo Conti, who otherwise took a less sanguine view of alternative medical practices, reportedly prescribed Weleda medicaments and helped protect anthroposophical doctors and Weleda during the later stages of the Third Reich.¹⁶⁰

Apart from the anthroposophist role in the 'New German Art of Healing,' other factors indicate the extent of anthroposophical medicine's imbrication with National

1918 and oversaw medicinal production at the Weleda complex in Schwäbisch-Gmünd. See also Hanns Georg Müller, "Lebensreform – aber zeitgemäß" *Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden* May 1935, 37. *Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden* was the most aggressively racist and antisemitic of the Nazi alternative health journals, and did not shy away from attacking other Nazis for not supporting alternative medicine. It ceased publication in October 1935.

¹⁵⁷ Karl Haedenkamp, "Der Weg zu einer neuen deutschen Heilkunde" *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* 66 (1936), 440-01.

¹⁵⁸ The May 1939 issue of *Demeter*, the journal of the biodynamic movement, opened with an obituary for Gerhard Wagner, praising his leadership of medical professions in the Third Reich and his support for biodynamics.

¹⁵⁹ Karl Haedenkamp, "Volksgesundheit und Lebensführung" *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* 68 (1938), 509-12, reporting on the July 1938 Tagung des Hauptamtes für Volksgesundheit led by Wagner. A third of the article is devoted to Dreidax's presentation "Boden und Volk" on the final day of the conference, and offers an extremely 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. According to Haedenkamp's report, Dreidax's presentation decried "die Beschränkung des deutschen Lebensraumes" and favorably contrasted the healthy German peasantry, "als rassisches Ausleseprodukt," to "den Menschen der Großstadt" (511).

¹⁶⁰ zur Linden, *Blick durchs Prisma*, 193. The claims are plausible, as zur Linden was a prominent anthroposophical physician with extensive connections in the Nazi leadership (he treated Walther Darré's and Hans Frank's children, among others) and served as one of Weleda's chief representatives in this period. See also Wilhelm zur Linden, "Das Blut als Spiegel von Krankheitsvorgängen" *Leib und Leben* November 1938, 242-43.

Socialist policies. A number of anthroposophist doctors were members of the Nazi party, the SS, or the SA.¹⁶¹ Dr. Ernst Harmstorf, for example, an important representative of anthroposophist medicine since its beginnings in the early 1920s, joined the NSDAP in March 1933 and the SA in May 1933.¹⁶² Anthroposophist medical student Gotthold Hegele was an SA member and a successful Nazi student leader.¹⁶³ Other anthroposophist physicians received outspokenly positive political evaluations even when they were not party members.¹⁶⁴ 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 apparatus and Nazi medical officials. According to one evaluation from August 1943, Bopp "wholeheartedly supports the National Socialist state at all times."¹⁶⁵ Major figures in anthroposophical medicine provided markedly positive portraits of Nazi leaders in their post-war memoirs.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Examples include Dr. Ernst Charrois, a 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); Dr. Hugo Kalbe, a member of the Anthroposophical Society and SA officer (BA R58/5709c: 1065 and 1079); and Dr. Werner Voigt, senior physician at the municipal hospital of Stettin, who joined the SA in November 1933 and the SS in May 1936 (BA RS/G466: 2865-3004). For biographical information on Voigt, without mention of his Nazi affiliations, see Selg, ed., *Anthroposophische Ärzte*, 334. German doctors in general were disproportionately represented in the Nazi party.

¹⁶² BA PK/D392: 289-320. For biographical details on Harmstorf, with no mention of his Nazi involvement, see Selg, ed., *Anthroposophische Ärzte*, 57, 297-300, 538, 620.

¹⁶³ 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 (the documents do not indicate whether his party membership was sustained), 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's biographical account (Selg, ed., *Anthroposophische Ärzte*, 472), which does not mention his Nazi activities, Hegele was an active anthroposophist during his time as a student leader in Tübingen.

¹⁶⁴ A March 1941 evaluation of Dr. Karl Hugo Zinck affirmed: "Politisch steht er durchaus auf dem Boden der nationalen Weltanschauung." Der Reichsdozentenführer, Reichsleitung der NSDAP, March 24, 1941, BA DS/B44: 1704.

¹⁶⁵ BA DS/ORP/A3: 779-882; quote on 783.

¹⁶⁶ Hauschka, *At the Dawn of a New Age*, Voith, *Im Gang der Zeiten*, and zur Linden, *Blick durchs Prisma* include several examples.

As with other branches of anthroposophy, the range of ideological overlap with central Nazi themes helps to explain this practical convergence. Overviews of anthroposophical 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, according to its self-presentation, was "firmly rooted in the German essence and in the German mission."¹⁶⁷ More specifically, a focus on holistic concepts and natural approaches provided common ground for Nazi interest in alternative health frameworks, as did the privileging of spiritual facets of healing over merely physical causes. Anthroposophy's key part in the development of a 'New German Art of Healing' also illuminates the multivalent links among *Lebensreform* ideals, alternative cultural innovations, back-to-nature aspirations, and unconventional visions of spiritual renewal, as well as their appropriation by significant strands within the Nazi movement.¹⁶⁸ This history thus illustrates the ways in which "fascist ideals fostered research directions and lifestyle fashions that look strikingly like those we today might embrace."¹⁶⁹

But National Socialist *Lebensreform* officials and medical authorities did not simply welcome any and all occult tendencies in the alternative health milieu; their sustained sponsorship of anthroposophical medicine stands out in some respects as a form of special treatment. The same agencies that supported anthroposophist projects suppressed other esoteric groups, including the Mazdaznan movement and the

¹⁶⁷ Walter Bopp, "Die Anthroposophie in den Gegenwartsfragen der Medizin" *Das Goetheanum* March 25, 1934, 93-94. The article also celebrates "die deutsche Geistesart" and the "Aufgabe des deutschen Menschen." See also Erhard Bartsch, "Kurze Betrachtung landwirtschaftlich-medizinischer Zusammenhänge" *Demeter* April 1935, 55-56.

¹⁶⁸ For an instance of the combination of anthroposophical medicine, biodynamic agriculture, and Waldorf education within the context of Nazi *Lebensreform* efforts see Erhard Bartsch to Hanns Georg Müller, May 16, 1939, and the attached minutes of the May 14, 1939 meeting with Müller in Bad Saarow, BA R9349/2/D.

¹⁶⁹ Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer*, 5.

Deutsche Neugeistbewegung.¹⁷⁰ This utter rejection contrasts sharply with the incorporation of anthroposophical organizations into Nazi structures and the collegial treatment of anthroposophists like Husemann, Dreidax, and Bopp.

The overall status and significance of alternative medical therapies within the Nazi health bureaucracy over the longer term is debatable.¹⁷¹ In historical perspective, holistic and natural approaches to healing experienced a notable resurgence during the Third Reich, at least for a time and at least from some Nazi quarters.¹⁷² Part of the reason for this success involved the expectation that natural medicine would offer a less expensive form of health care and contribute to the effort toward German economic autonomy. One aspect that merits further research is the linking of

¹⁷⁰ “Arbeitstagung des Sachverständigenbeirats für Volksgesundheit” *Der Heilpraktiker* April 1934, 10-16, reporting that Nazi *Lebensreform* officials have expelled the *Neugeistbewegung* from their ranks. Bernard Hörmann, the *Reichsamtseleiter* in the Hauptamt für Volksgesundheit and keen supporter of biodynamics, attacked the Mazdaznan movement and other forms of ‘medical occultism’; cf. Bothe, *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde*, 215-16. Mazdaznan promoted a “health and breath culture” combining alternative nutrition, breathing exercises, yoga, and racial hygiene; it was outlawed in Germany in 1935. The *Neugeistbewegung*, the German affiliate of the New Thought movement, was popular in German *Lebensreform* circles, advocating physical exercise, vegetarian diet, and spiritual purification. I discuss the treatment of both groups in chapter 6. For an argument that occult forms of alternative medicine fared relatively well under Nazism see Heyll, *Wasser, Fasten, Luft und Licht*, 206, 244, 259.

¹⁷¹ Both Haug, *Die Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für eine Neue Deutsche Heilkunde* and Klee, *Deutsche Medizin im Dritten Reich* downplay the significance of alternative medicine under Nazism. Part of Haug’s basic argument is that the Nazis merely misused and instrumentalized alternative medicine while actually reinforcing conventional medicine; his account neglects the ideological affinities between *Naturheilkunde* and *völkisch* thought and their resonance for Nazi leaders like Streicher and Hess. For contrary interpretations emphasizing the convergence between alternative medicine and Nazism see Bothe, *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde 1933-1945*; Kratz, *Die Heilkunde in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik - Die ‘angepaßte’ Medizin in der Zeit der NS-Diktatur*; Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 82-83, 164-66, 231, 355, 389; Angetter, “Alternativmedizin kontra Schulmedizin im Nationalsozialismus”; Wuttke, “Zum Verhältnis von Natur- und Volksheilkunde und Schulmedizin im Nationalsozialismus”.

¹⁷² For comparative perspective see Cornelia Regin, *Selbsthilfe und Gesundheitspolitik: Die Naturheilbewegung im Kaiserreich, 1889 bis 1914* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1995) on official efforts against the nature healing movement during the Wilhelmine era; for further context see Harrington, *Reenchanted Science*; Claudia Huerkamp, “Medizinische Lebensreform im späten 19. Jahrhundert: Die Naturheilbewegung in Deutschland als Protest gegen die naturwissenschaftliche Universitätsmedizin” *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 73 (1986), 158-82; Martin Dinges, ed., *Medizinkritische Bewegungen im Deutschen Reich* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996); Thomas Faltin, *Heil und Heilung: Geschichte der Laienheilkundigen und Struktur antimodernistischer Weltanschauungen in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000); Michael Kenny, “A Darker Shade of Green: Medical Botany, Homeopathy, and Cultural Politics in Interwar Germany” *Social History of Medicine* 15 (2002), 481-504; Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

alternative health advocacy with Nazi racial doctrines, exemplified among other things in the consistent presence of Walter Groß, head of the Nazi party's Office of Racial Policy, in alternative medical contexts.¹⁷³ More nuanced assessments of the topic note that National Socialism in several of its forms provided enhanced ideological stature and institutional support to alternative medical pursuits, and oversaw a material expansion of many varieties of alternative health care, combined simultaneously with targeted repression, control, prohibition, and overall *Gleichschaltung*, the integration or coordination of societal organizations into conformity with the regime.¹⁷⁴ The career of anthroposophical medicine during the Nazi era reflected these complex processes, as the adoption and absorption of anthroposophist elements went hand in hand with organizational elimination and ideological hostility from Nazi opponents of occultism, and the potential fusion of the *Lebensreform* and National Socialist movements reached its limit and its fulfillment at the same time.

Biodynamic Agriculture and the Politics of Blood and Soil

Just how much potential there was for such a hybrid of *Lebensreform* and Nazi motifs emerges from the history of biodynamic farming in the Third Reich.¹⁷⁵ 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, garnering praise from an extraordinary range of leading Nazis and winning supporters and

¹⁷³ On Groß see Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 103-30.

¹⁷⁴ Wuttke-Groneberg, "Nationalsozialistische Medizin: Volks- und Naturheilkunde auf 'neuen Wegen'" offers a thoughtful survey of these dynamics, with substantial attention to the role of anthroposophical medicine.

¹⁷⁵ In contrast to anthroposophist medicine, archival sources on the biodynamic movement during the Nazi era are notably rich, and many of them have yet to be analyzed. On the basis of these sources I have sketched the chief themes of this convoluted history here, and plan to devote a longer subsequent study to the topic in the context of debates over organic farming and nature protection efforts in the Third Reich.

advocates 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 policy, food policy, and other areas. For a time biodynamic farming had the support of the Nazi minister of agriculture and was extensively 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 various concentration camps. The details of this unusually close association between Steiner's followers and the Nazi movement have given rise to provocative historical disputes over the role of organic agriculture and environmentalist inclinations in the Third Reich, disputes which continue to generate sharply divergent conclusions.¹⁷⁶ The contentious nature of the topic echoes the vexed relationship between Nazism's 'blood and soil' ideals and the concrete realities of ecologically oriented practices.

¹⁷⁶ Much of the debate stems from sympathetic works on Nazi Minister of Agriculture Richard Walther 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 Bramwell, "The Steiner Connection" in Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 195-208. Subsequent studies have harshly criticized Bramwell's interpretations and controverted many of her claims; see e.g. 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; Gustavo Corni and Herbert Gies, *Blut und Boden': Rassenideologie und Agrarpolitik im Staat Hitlers* (Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner Verlag, 1994). In some cases these justified critiques of Bramwell's work have overemphasized Darré's skepticism toward anthroposophy, and generally give inadequate attention to the extensive support for biodynamics provided by Darré's staff. The reaction against Bramwell has even led some historians to 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.

Biodynamic agriculture developed out of one of Steiner's last series of lectures in 1924 and soon generated a dedicated movement among his followers.¹⁷⁷ Its basic features center 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 reject monoculture and abjure artificial fertilizers and pesticides, relying instead on manure, compost, and a variety of homeopathic preparations meant to channel etheric and celestial energies.¹⁷⁸ The emphasis on spiritual influences rather than 'materialist' techniques aims to maintain healthier soil, produce higher quality food, and promote harmonious interaction with the natural environment. The result is an innovative form of organic agriculture whose core practices are anchored firmly in occult lore. By 1932 the most established structures for biodynamic marketing were the Demeter line of organic food products and Weleda cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.¹⁷⁹ Biodynamic producers were

¹⁷⁷ The primary text is Rudolf Steiner, *Agriculture: A Course of Eight Lectures* (London: Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association, 1974). For anthroposophical histories 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); Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, "New Directions in Agriculture" in Freeman and Waterman, eds., *Rudolf Steiner: Recollections by Some of his Pupils*, 118-130; and F.C.L. Schmidt, ed., *Der landwirtschaftliche Impuls Rudolf Steiners und seine Entfaltung während der Tätigkeit des 'Versuchsringes Anthroposophischer Landwirte in Deutschland' 1924 – 1945* (Birenbach: Werner Müller, n.d.). Scholarly accounts are available in Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1579-1607; Gunter Vogt, *Entstehung und Entwicklung des ökologischen Landbaus im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Bad Dürkheim: Stiftung Ökologie und Landbau, 2000), 98-192; Holger Kirchmann, "Biological Dynamic Farming – An Occult Form of Alternative Agriculture?" *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 7 (1994), 173-87; for context cf. Reinhard Farkas, "Alternative Landwirtschaft / Biologischer Landbau" in Kerbs and Reulecke, eds., *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen*, 301-13.

¹⁷⁸ Biodynamic preparations are produced according to Steiner's instructions and employed in various parts of the growing cycle. A mixture of manure, mineral or herbal ingredients is placed in a cow horn, deer bladder, or other animal organ and buried in the ground for a specific period, then unearthed and mixed with water in homeopathic proportions, stirred at a particular rhythm, and applied to the soil or plants. This serves to harness "radiations that tend to etherealize and astralise," such that the preparation "is inwardly quickened with these forces, which thus gather up and attract from the surrounding earth all that is ethereal and life-giving." Steiner, *Agriculture*, 74.

¹⁷⁹ In addition to these better-known brand names, biodynamic farmers formed several other early organizations, including the *Versuchsring anthroposophischer Landwirte* and the *Gesellschaft zur Förderung der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise*.

organized in a cooperative founded in 1927 with the help of Georg Michaelis, former chancellor of the German Reich.¹⁸⁰

In July 1933 the acknowledged leader of the biodynamic movement in Germany, anthroposophist Erhard Bartsch, founded the *Reichsverband für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise* (RVBDW) or Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture, with headquarters at Bartsch's estate in Bad Saarow.¹⁸¹ The new organization united the chief biodynamic institutions, including the Demeter brand, under one formal leadership. The movement initially viewed Nazism's agrarian policy as vindication against their enemies.¹⁸² During the first year of the Nazi regime, however, biodynamic representatives faced intense opposition from several regional Nazi leaders, and the movement was banned in Thuringia in November 1933, in part due to lobbying by the chemical industry. The ban was rescinded a year later.¹⁸³ Such

¹⁸⁰ Michaelis (1857-1936), who had been Chancellor of Imperial Germany from July through October 1917 and previously served as head of the *Reichsgetreidestelle* and Prussian *Staatskommissar für Volksernährung*, played a crucial role in the development of the biodynamic movement during the last decade of his life. He was chairman of the *Gesellschaft zur Förderung der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise* and owned the estate at Marienhöhe in Bad Saarow, Brandenburg, a centerpiece of biodynamic cultivation, which he sold to Erhard Bartsch in 1928. During the Weimar Republic Michaelis belonged to the DNVP and joined the NSDAP in 1933; he continued his active participation in the biodynamic movement until his death, advocating on its behalf in negotiations with Hess and Darré in 1934. Michaelis 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, as well as the anthroposophist biography of Michaelis in von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 520-21.

¹⁸¹ The *Reichsverband für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise* comprised the *Versuchsring für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise*, the *Gesellschaft zur Förderung der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise*, the *Demeter Wirtschaftsband*, a *Siedlerschule* in Worpsswede, Saxony, as well as the biodynamic journal *Demeter*. For Bartsch's work see Erhard Bartsch, *Die Not der Landwirtschaft* (Bad Saarow: Verwertungsgenossenschaft Demeter, 1927), and Erhard Bartsch, *Die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise: Kerngedanken und Grundtatsachen, Überwindung des Materialismus in Landwirtschaft und Gartenbau* (Dresden: Emil Weise, 1934).

¹⁸² Erhard Bartsch, "Betriebs-Autarkie" *Demeter* March 1933, 41-45; cf. Bartsch, "Was ist biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise?" *Natur und Kultur* April 1938, 117-18.

¹⁸³ 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. The reversal of the ban was ordered by Wilhelm Frick, Minister of the Interior; see Frick to Gestapa Berlin, December 17, 1935, BA R58/6195/2: 534. For additional details on opponents of biodynamics see the December 1934 "Geschäftsbericht des Reichsverbandes für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise" BA R58/6197/1: 186-93.

setbacks notwithstanding, the RVBDW experienced impressive growth during the Third Reich and soon added a remarkable array of Nazi luminaries to its roster of supporters. As early as April 1934, Nazi Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick visited Bartsch's biodynamic estate and expressed his encouragement for the organization. He was followed by a parade of similarly high-profile figures, including not just Hess, Ohlendorf and Baeumler but Walter Granzow, the Nazi premier of Mecklenburg; Rudi Peuckert, head of the Reich Office for Agricultural Policy and Nazi 'peasant leader' (*Landesbauernführer*) for Thuringia; the leader of the German Labor Front, Reich Commissar Robert Ley; and even Alfred Rosenberg. Like Frick and Hess, Ley, Rosenberg, and many others were guests at RVBDW headquarters in Bad Saarow and explicitly voiced their support for the undertaking.¹⁸⁴

The biodynamic movement received extensive praise in the Nazi press, from the *Völkischer Beobachter* to rural venues and health periodicals.¹⁸⁵ Anthroposophist authors returned the favor in *Demeter*, the biodynamic journal, emphasizing in particular Nazism's effort to attain agricultural autarky for Germany.¹⁸⁶ The front

¹⁸⁴ On the growth of the RVBDW see e.g. the November 19, 1939 audit of the organization, BA R58/6197/1: 40-43; on 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 report "Tagung des Reichsverbandes" in *Demeter* December 1935, 205-06, and Herman Polzer, "Reichstagung für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise" *Leib und Leben* January 1936, 18-19.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Oskar Krüger, "Neue Wege des Landbaues" *Völkischer Beobachter* August 28, 1940, 7, a lengthy and glowing portrait of biodynamics, particularly Bartsch's Marienhöhe estate; 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, another fulsome article on biodynamics and Marienhöhe, pointing especially to the compatibility of biodynamic agriculture with "unseren nationalsozialistischen Planungen"; and Käthe Wietfeld, "Volkskraft und Volksgesundheit" *Gesundes Leben* March 1940, 60, which praises the RVBDW, *Demeter*, and Weleda as contributors to the people's health.

¹⁸⁶ See e.g. Erhard Bartsch, "Zurück zum Agrarstaat" *Demeter: Monatsschrift für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise* September 1933, 163-64; "Beitrag zum Autarkieproblem" *Demeter* August 1933, 139-42; Franz Dreidax, "Heimatspflege und Landwirtschaft" *Demeter* September 1933, 187-92. A report in the February 1939 issue of *Demeter* concluded: "So scheint mir denn die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise dafür vorbestimmt zu sein, die Forderung unserer Regierung zu erfüllen: 'Ernährungsfreiheit des Deutschen Volkes auf Deutscher Scholle!'" (22) Franz Dreidax's

cover of the May 1939 issue featured a bucolic picture of Adolf Hitler in an alpine landscape, surrounded by children, in honor of the Führer's fiftieth birthday. *Demeter* also celebrated the annexation of Austria, the Sudetenland, Bohemia, and Moravia, the German attack on Poland, the fall of France, and various German military victories.¹⁸⁷ The journal blamed England for starting the war and called for using prisoners of war in environmental projects.¹⁸⁸ Biodynamic principles and practices were praised in print by prominent representatives of Nazi agricultural policy.¹⁸⁹ Even staff members of the Wehrmacht high command supported biodynamics.¹⁹⁰

A crucial source of institutional backing for the biodynamic movement came from Nazi *Lebensreform* officials, above all Hanns Georg Müller. Müller published a series of biodynamic books and pamphlets in his publishing house and strongly promoted biodynamics in the Nazi journal he edited, *Leib und Leben*.¹⁹¹ Some of the

January 1934 text "Versuchsanstellungen mit biologisch-dynamischer Wirtschaftsweise" is full of praise for "die weitblickenden führenden Männer des neuen Deutschland" (BA R3602/2608).

¹⁸⁷ The September 1939 issue of *Demeter* opened with a special announcement hailing the start of the war; it began: "Die Stunde der Bewährung ist angebrochen! Der Führer hat die Verteidigung der Ehre und der Lebensrechte des deutschen Volkes übernommen." The lead article in the September 1940 issue of *Demeter* declared: "Dazu sollen die Erkenntnisse und Erfahrungen unserer Wirtschaftsweise dienen und die Liebe zur Scholle und Heimat immer mehr wecken. Das soll unser Ziel und unsere hohe Aufgabe sein, gemeinsam mit unserem Führer Adolf Hitler für die Befreiung unseres lieben deutschen Vaterlandes zu kämpfen!" (84)

¹⁸⁸ *Demeter* July 1940, 64; *Demeter* October 1940, 99. The journal consistently referred to Steiner by name.

¹⁸⁹ See e.g. Hermann Schneider, *Schicksalsgemeinschaft Europa: Leben und Nahrung aus der europäischen Scholle* (Breslau: Gutsmann, 1941), particularly 89-102. Schneider was a Reichstag member, an SS Standartenführer, and *Reichsinspekteur für die Erzeugungsschlacht*, the Nazi program for agricultural autarky. For his correspondence in support of biodynamics see BA R9349/3/Sch. In 1939 Schneider visited Bartsch's estate as Darré's representative (BA R58/6223/1: 301).

¹⁹⁰ For example, Wehrwirtschaftsstab beim Oberkommando der Wehrmacht to Reichshauptamtsleiter Rauber, Stabsamt des Reichsbauernführers, October 7, 1939, says unambiguously that the OKW supports "the biodynamic method of cultivation." (BA R58/6223/1: 331) Cf. Erhard Bartsch to Albert Friehe, October 9, 1939, BA R9349/2.

¹⁹¹ Müller's publishing house, the Müllersche Verlagshandlung, was based successively in Dresden and in Planegg, near Munich. Its biodynamic publications include 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); Franz Lippert, *Zur Praxis des Heilpflanzenbaus* (Dresden: Müller, 1939); Nicolaus Remer, *Gesundheit und Leistung bei Haustieren* (Dresden: Müller, 1940); Hellmut Bartsch and Franz Dreidax, *Der lebendige Dünger* (Planegg: Müller, 1941). Müller's journal *Leib und Leben: Zeitschrift der Reformbewegung* took a zealous National Socialist line; it was published by the official

most frequent authors in the journal were biodynamic spokespeople, including Franz Dreidax and Alwin Seifert. One of the chief themes in such publications was the congruence of National Socialist ideals with biodynamic practices; biodynamic growers 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.¹⁹² The biodynamic movement had in fact cultivated contacts with Nazi circles well before Hitler's rise to power, and drew on a consistent palette of ideas before and after 1933.¹⁹³ Later biodynamic texts combined anthroposophical and National Socialist vocabularies, including Lebensraum and blood and soil terminology, and celebrated

Nazi *Lebensreform* organization, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lebensreform, from 1933 to 1943. Dozens of celebratory articles on biodynamics appeared in its pages, many of them written by senior officials in the Nazi *Lebensreform* movement, such as Robert Banfield, Herman Polzer, Eva Hauck and Fritz Hugo Hoffmann. *Leib und Leben* and *Demeter* were sister journals and routinely advertised for one another.

¹⁹² Robert Banfield, "Landwirtschaftliche Tagung für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise" *Leib und Leben* January 1935, 17-19: "Bei den großangelegten Einführungsreden der Herren Dr. Bartsch und besonders Dipl.-Ing. Dreidax fiel auf, wie sehr diese z. T. leider noch stark angefeindete Bewegung seit langem und weitgehend das gleiche Ideengut vertritt wie der Nationalsozialismus in bezug auf Bauerntum und seine Bedeutung für unser Volk." (18) Banfield was the Stellvertretender Leiter der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Lebensreform.

¹⁹³ For earlier biodynamic texts see among others Max Karl Schwarz, "Biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise unter Berücksichtigung ihres Wertes für den Gartengedanken" *Gartenkunst* October 1930, 167-70; Max K. Schwarz, "Zum Siedlungsproblem" *Demeter* October 1931, 180-85; Erhard Bartsch, "Neuaufbau der Wirtschaft von unten herauf" *Demeter* August 1932, 135-37; Max Karl Schwarz, *Ein Weg zum praktischen Siedeln* (Düsseldorf: Pflugschar-Verlag, 1933). Becker, *Georg Michaelis*, 667, reports that Nazi representatives were regular participants at biodynamic events from 1931 onward. Herman Polzer, "Ein bäuerliches Kulturideal: Zur Jahrestagung für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise in Bad Saarow" *Leib und Leben* February 1939, 29, noted "die verständnis- und vertrauensvollen Beziehungen, die vor der Machtübernahme vom Agrarpolitischen Apparat der NSDAP hinüber zu Männern der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise bestanden" (emphasis in original). Polzer, whose own involvement in biodynamic circles dated to 1927, also claimed that the *Artamanen*, an influential *völkisch* group, practiced biodynamic cultivation in the late 1920s (*ibid.*, 31). Both Himmler and Darré belonged to the *Artamanen*, and another proponent of biodynamics within the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lebensreform*, Fritz Hugo Hoffmann, had been a leader of the *Artamanen*. For context see Kater, "Die Artamanen"; Ulrich Linse, *Zurück o Mensch zur Mutter Erde: Landkommunen in Deutschland 1890-1933* (Munich: DTV, 1983), 327-39; Stefan Brauckmann, "Zur Saat und Tat": *Die Artamanen als Gruppierung innerhalb der völkisch-nationalistischen Strömungen, 1924-1935* (Master's thesis, Universität Hamburg, 2005).

the extensive contributions made by biodynamic practices to the environmental policy of the Third Reich.¹⁹⁴

Beyond verbal expressions of mutual admiration, Müller and his colleagues in the Nazi *Lebensreform* apparatus welcomed the biodynamic movement as a leading force in their institutions. In 1935 the RVBDW became a corporative member of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lebensreform*, the Nazi umbrella organization for *Lebensreform* groups, and two anthroposophists, Franz Dreidax and Erhard Bartsch, joined the organization's *Führerrat* or leadership council. Dreidax and Bartsch served as active leaders of the organization for years, promoting its combination of Nazi values and alternative cultural initiatives.¹⁹⁵ The first principle of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lebensreform* declared: "The worldview of the German *Lebensreform* movement is National Socialism."¹⁹⁶ Even as Müller and his staff excluded other alternative tendencies from the organization, biodynamic adherents continued as active representatives of Nazism's incorporation of environmentally oriented causes.¹⁹⁷ In 1939 Bartsch boasted, with considerable justification, that "the leading

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Max Karl Schwarz, "Bildekräfte im Lebensraum der Landschaft" *Demeter* April 1939, 59-66; Max K. Schwarz, *Zur landschaftlichen Ausgestaltung der Straßen in Norddeutschland* (Berlin: Volk und Reich Verlag, 1940); Erhard Bartsch, "Der Impuls der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise" *Demeter* June 1937, 93-95; Franz Dreidax, "Lebendiger Boden – ewiges Volk" *Leib und Leben* October 1938, 199-205; Franz Lippert, "Der Bauerngarten" *Leib und Leben* June 1941, 80-81.

¹⁹⁵ Fritzen, *Gesünder Leben*, 66, citing Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, erroneously claims that anthroposophists were excluded from Nazi *Lebensreform* organizations. On RVBDW involvement in the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lebensreform* see Bothe, *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde 1933-1945*, 220-26; cf. Judith Baumgartner, *Ernährungsreform - Antwort auf Industrialisierung und Ernährungswandel: Ernährungsreform als Teil der Lebensreformbewegung* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1992), 55-57.

¹⁹⁶ Bartsch's and Dreidax's colleague Herman Polzer described the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lebensreform* thus: "Unsere Gesellschaft ist nicht ein bürgerlicher Verein, sondern ein Arbeitskreis einsatzbereiter Nationalsozialisten. Der Fels, auf dem wir bauen, ist die nationalsozialistische Weltanschauung. Ihre lebensgesetzlichen Grundgedanken aber nimmt jeder von uns nicht nur politisch, sondern auch für sein gesamtes persönliches und Alltagsleben als verpflichtend und bindend an." (*Leib und Leben* May 1941, 72) The organization comprised groups dedicated to alternative health, nutrition, farming, and other versions of 'lifestyle reform' as part of the Nazi project. Cf. Franz Dreidax, "Jahrestagung der Lebensreform in Innsbruck August 1938" *Demeter* October 1938, 178-79.

¹⁹⁷ As an example of the long-running cooperation between the biodynamic movement and the Nazi *Lebensreform* agency see Hanns Georg Müller to Reichsverband für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise, May 12, 1937: "Das Referat Lebensreform im Sachverständigenbeirat für

men of the Demeter movement have put themselves, their knowledge and experience wholeheartedly at the service of National Socialist Germany.”¹⁹⁸

A further area in which proponents of biodynamic cultivation had a significant impact on Nazi policies was the enforcement of environmental standards in major building projects, most famously the construction of the Autobahn system. This work was overseen by a coterie of “advocates for the landscape” under the direction of Alwin Seifert, whose official title was *Reichslandschaftsanwalt*.¹⁹⁹ Their task was to preserve wetlands and environmentally sensitive areas of the countryside as much as possible, to ensure that large public works projects were ecologically sustainable, and to embed the new Autobahn roadways harmoniously into the surrounding landscape.

Volksgesundheit betreut seit 1933 im Rahmen der Gesamtprobleme der Lebensreformbewegung und – wirtschaft auch die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise. Referent für die Fragen der Reformbewegung ist Pg. Hanns G. Müller, der auch die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lebensreform leitet.” (BA R9349/1) See also Müller to Bartsch, November 28, 1936, on letterhead of the NSDAP Reichsleitung, in *ibid.*, describing the RVBDW as under the protection of his office. The correspondence between Müller and the RVBDW extends from 1934 to 1940, and reveals Müller as a loyal and enthusiastic ally of biodynamic concerns. See also the numerous letters from Bartsch to Müller in BA R9349/3/M.

¹⁹⁸ Bartsch to Eickhoff, August 22, 1937: “dass sich die führenden Männer der Demeter-Bewegung rückhaltlos mit ihren Kenntnissen und Erfahrungen dem nationalsozialistischen Deutschland zur Verfügung gestellt haben.” (BA R9349/2) Cf. Erhard Bartsch, “Haltet den Boden gesund!” *Demeter* January 1938, 1; “Kulturschaffendes Bauerntum” *Demeter* January 1941, 1-2.

¹⁹⁹ On Seifert compare Charlotte Reitsam, *Das Konzept der ‘bodenständigen Gartenkunst’ Alwin Seiferts* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2001); Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Grüne Biographien: Biographisches Handbuch zur Landschaftsarchitektur des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (Berlin: Patzer, 1997), 361-63; Franz Seidler, *Fritz Todt: Baumeister des Dritten Reiches* (Berlin: Herbig, 1986), 116-20, 279-85; Thomas Zeller, “‘Ganz Deutschland sein Garten’: Alwin Seifert und die Landschaft des Nationalsozialismus” in Radkau and Uekötter, eds., *Naturschutz und Nationalsozialismus*, 273-307; 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; Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, “Biodynamischer Gartenbau, Landschaftsarchitektur und Nationalsozialismus” *Das Gartenamt* September 1993, 590-95, and October 1993, 638-42; Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Der Drang nach Osten: Zur Entwicklung der Landespflege im Nationalsozialismus und während des Zweiten Weltkrieges in den ‘eingegliederten Ostgebieten’* (Munich: Minerva, 1987). For context on the Autobahn project compare Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, “Political Landscapes and Technology: Nazi Germany and the Landscape Design of the Reichsautobahnen” *CELA Annual Conference Papers* 1995; William Rollins, “Whose Landscape? Technology, Fascism, and Environmentalism on the National Socialist Autobahn” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85 (1995), 494-520; Erhard Schütz, *Mythos Reichsautobahn: Bau und Inszenierung der Straßen des Führers 1933-1941* (Berlin: Links, 2000); Thomas Zeller, *Driving Germany: The Landscape of the German Autobahn, 1930-1970* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007).

Several anthroposophists worked as “advocates for the landscape” under Seifert.²⁰⁰ An influential advisor to Reich Minister Fritz Todt, Seifert has been described as “the most prominent environmentalist in the Third Reich.”²⁰¹ He was a fervent promoter of biodynamic methods from 1930 onward and consistently used his position to further the goals of the biodynamic movement, with the active support of Hess, Müller and others.²⁰² Seifert, who joined the Nazi party in 1938, has sometimes been considered an anthroposophist, but in light of his reservations about Steiner’s esoteric worldview he may be more accurately seen as a non-anthroposophist activist on behalf of biodynamics.²⁰³ Still, in a May 1937 letter to Hess addressing anthroposophy’s influence within Nazi circles he remarked: “An astonishing amount of spiritual material has been borrowed from the anthroposophist movement without identifying the source.”²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ These include Werner Bauch and Carl Sieglöcher; cf. Zeller, *Driving Germany*, 87-88. Zeller also describes Camillo Schneider as an “organized Anthroposophist”; cf. Claudia Vierle, *Camillo Schneider: Eine Studie zu seinem Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Technische Universität, 1998). A further member of Seifert’s coterie of landscape advocates, Hinrich Meyer-Jungclaussen, was a supporter of biodynamics and belonged to the RVBDW; see BA R58/6197/1: 194 and BA R58/6144/2: 109.

²⁰¹ Zeller, “Molding the Landscape of Nazi Environmentalism,” 148. For a variety of his works see 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, “Die Wiedergeburt landschaftsgebundenen Bauens” *Die Strasse* September 1941, 286-89; Alwin Seifert, *Im Zeitalter des Lebendigen: Natur, Heimat, Technik* (Planegg: Müller, 1941).

²⁰² According to his own account, a 1930 lecture by anthroposophist Max Karl Schwarz persuaded Seifert to try a biodynamic approach, and he became henceforth committed to the biodynamic movement; cf. Alwin Seifert, “Über naturnahen Gartenbau” *Leib und Leben* August 1942, 67-69.

²⁰³ Uekoetter, *The Green and the Brown*, 45, describes Seifert as “perhaps the most influential anthroposophist in Nazi Germany,” while Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1601, classifies Seifert as an anthroposophist as well; for an anthroposophical viewpoint see Reinhard Falter, “Alwin Seifert” in von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 751-52, and Falter, “Ein Leben für die Landschaft” *Novalis* March 1995, 38-42. On Seifert’s party membership see his December 18, 1940 *Reichsschrifttumskammer* application, BA RK/B185: 2300, stating that he is an NSDAP member. Hess’s letters to Seifert address him as “Lieber Parteigenosse Seifert,” e.g. Hess to Seifert, November 14, 1938, BA R58/6223/1: 318. During his post-war denazification hearings Seifert claimed falsely that he had been made a party member without his knowledge. For context see Reitsam, *Das Konzept der ‘bodenständigen Gartenkunst’ Alwin Seiferts*, 21, 25-26. I am indebted to Peter Bierl for providing copies of Seifert’s 1947-1948 *Spruchkammer* file from the Staatsarchiv München, as well as copies of Seifert’s letters to Hess from 1934 to 1941 from the Institut für Zeitgeschichte.

²⁰⁴ Alwin Seifert to Rudolf Hess, May 10, 1937, Institut für Zeitgeschichte ED 32/422/1952: 101.

Among Seifert's principal colleagues as "advocate for the landscape" was long-time biodynamic leader and anthroposophist Max Karl Schwarz, a chief participant in applying biodynamic methods on the Autobahn project and an important publicist for biodynamic principles. Schwarz maintained extensive contacts within the Nazi hierarchy and reportedly converted Robert Ley's estate to biodynamic format.²⁰⁵ He published in a range of Nazi periodicals and supported National Socialism without becoming a party member.²⁰⁶ Several other active biodynamic representatives did belong to the party, including Albert Friehe, a functionary of the RVBDW, who was an NSDAP candidate for the Reichstag in 1932 and held a variety of party positions after 1933.²⁰⁷ Anthroposophist Carl Grund, leader of the 'Information Office for Biodynamic Agriculture,' was a member of both the NSDAP and the SA and in 1942 was made a commissioned officer in the SS, where he worked as a specialist for agricultural questions.²⁰⁸ Biodynamics and National Socialism appeared to be eminently compatible.

²⁰⁵ Seifert to Darré, June 12, 1941, BAK N1094/II/1.

²⁰⁶ Preußische Geheime Staatspolizei, March 16, 1937 evaluation of Max Karl Schwarz: "Er ist kein Parteigenosse, steht aber hinter der NS-Bewegung." (BA R58/6195/1: 439) Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Grüne Biographien*, 358, describe Schwarz as "ein überzeugter Vertreter der nationalsozialistischen Blut-und-Boden Ideologie." His publications include Max K. Schwarz, "Betriebsorganismen an der Reichsautobahn" *Die Strasse* December 1939, 659-62; 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; Schwarz, "Ein Vorschlag zur biologischen Regelung der städtischen Abfallwirtschaft" *Leib und Leben* December 1942, 108-09. For an anthroposophical biography of Schwarz see von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 743-45.

²⁰⁷ Friehe joined the NSDAP in 1925 and was a candidate for the party in both of the 1932 Reichstag elections; his areas of expertise within the party were agricultural policy and racial policy. In January 1932 he was appointed 'Fachreferent für bäuerliches Bildungswesen bei der Reichsleitung der NSDAP'; from February 1934 onward he was a 'ständiger Mitarbeiter des Rassenpolitischen Amtes der NSDAP'; he became mayor of the town of Bückeberg in Saxony in 1935. In 1940 Friehe was Leiter der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise in Bückeberg (BA PK/A199: 2718). For his party history see BA PK/C313: 1119-1178; for his RVBDW correspondence see BA R9349/2/F. Another active RVBDW representative, anthroposophist Harald Kabisch, joined the NSDAP in 1941 (BA PK/F223: 2505-2522). For background on Kabisch see Götz Deimann, ed., *Die anthroposophischen Zeitschriften von 1903 bis 1985* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1987), 444-46.

²⁰⁸ Grund was a member of the *Versuchsring anthroposophischer Landwirte* from 1929 onward and 'Leiter der Auskunftsstelle für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise' in Saxony. He joined the NSDAP in May 1933 and the SA in November 1933. In August 1942 he was named an SS-

For most of the 1930s, however, the biodynamic movement failed to win the coveted support of the Nazi minister of agriculture, Richard Walther Darré. Chief popularizer of the ‘blood and soil’ ideology, Darré fulfilled multiple roles in the Third Reich. He was an important racial theorist and co-founded the SS Office of Race and Settlement with Himmler. He headed the NSDAP’s agrarian apparatus, which was instrumental in gaining support for the party in rural areas; in 1933 he became minister of agriculture and head of the *Reichsnährstand* or Reich Food Estate, and was named *Reichsbauernführer* or Reich Peasant Leader as well.²⁰⁹ Darré focused on achieving increased agricultural productivity while reversing the demographic trend toward urbanization, as well as restoring ostensible rural values and encouraging a return to agrarian customs, in part through various ‘settlement’ schemes and the *Erbhof* legislation regulating the inheritance of farmland.²¹⁰ These policies were meant to

Untersturmführer and in July 1943 was promoted to Obersturmführer; his SS title was ‘Referent für landwirtschaftliche Fragen’ (BA SSO/40A: 853-871).

²⁰⁹ For background see Clifford Lovin, “Blut und Boden: The Ideological Basis of the Nazi Agricultural Program” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28 (1967), 279-88; J.E. Farquharson, *The Plough and the Swastika: The NSDAP and Agriculture in Germany, 1928-45* (London: Sage, 1976); Gustavo Corni, *Hitler and the Peasants: Agrarian policy of the Third Reich, 1930-1939* (New York: Berg, 1990); Gustavo Corni and Herbert Gies, *Brot-Butter-Kanonnen: Die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997); 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); Andrea D’Onofrio, *Razza, sangue e suolo: Utopie della razza e progetti eugenetici nel ruralismo nazista* (Naples: ClíoPress, 2007).

²¹⁰ Cf. Friedrich Grundmann, *Agrarpolitik im ‘Dritten Reich’: Anspruch und Wirklichkeit des Reichserbhofgesetzes* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1979); Jan Smit, *Neubildung deutschen Bauerntums: Innere Kolonisation im Dritten Reich* (Kassel: Gesamthochschule Kassel, 1983); 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); Volker Klemm, *Agrarwissenschaften im ‘Dritten Reich’: Aufstieg oder Sturz?* (Berlin: Humboldt-Universität, 1994); Daniela Münkler, *Nationalsozialistische Agrarpolitik und Bauernalltag* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1996); Michael Hartenstein, *Neue Dorflandschaften: Nationalsozialistische Siedlungsplanung in den “eingegliederten Ostgebieten” 1939 bis 1944* (Berlin: Köster, 1998); Susanne Heim, *Autarkie und Ostexpansion: Pflanzenzucht und Agrarforschung im Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002); Isabel Heinemann, “Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut”: *Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003); Carsten Klingemann, “Agrarsoziologie und Agrarpolitik im Dritten Reich” in Josef Ehmer, ed., *Herausforderung Bevölkerung: Zu Entwicklungen des modernen Denkens über die Bevölkerung vor, im und nach dem ‘Dritten Reich’* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007), 183-99; Christian Böse, *Die Entstehung und Fortbildung des Reichserbhofgesetzes* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2008).

strengthen a Germanic unity of blood and soil embodied in a racially healthy peasant stock and its care for the landscape. Darré's theories served to underwrite the push for Lebensraum and colonization of territory in Eastern Europe. His effective power diminished in the course of the 1930s, particularly in the wake of a 1938 falling out with Himmler, and he was de facto replaced by his subordinate, Herbert Backe, in May 1942.

Although biodynamic ideals converged with several of his core ideas, such as a hoped-for return to an agrarian social order, pastoral romanticism paired with hostility toward materialism, or the vision of a simpler and healthier rural life, Darré was initially skeptical toward biodynamic farming and its anthroposophical underpinnings.²¹¹ While Hess deterred him from interfering with Steiner's followers, he looked askance at their claims of efficiency, fertility, and quality and was decidedly unsympathetic toward biodynamic efforts to curry favor within his network of agricultural institutions. Darré also feuded with Seifert in 1936 and 1937, further distancing him from the biodynamic movement.²¹² His attitude began to shift in early 1939, due in part to economic exigencies and in part to the patient but persistent work of anthroposophist members of his staff and their allies in the far-flung apparatus he oversaw.²¹³ Through a gradual series of steps, including invitations to agricultural officials to visit biodynamic farms and acquaint themselves with their procedures and results, a pro-biodynamic faction emerged among the higher-level personnel around Darré. But a number of powerful figures remained obdurately opposed to

²¹¹ A perceptive overview of Darré's thought is available in Frank-Lothar Kroll, *Utopie als Ideologie: Geschichtsdenken und politisches Handeln im Dritten Reich* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1998), 157-205.

²¹² See e.g. Darré to Todt, January 15, 1937, BA NS10/29: 12-17, a six-page letter outlining his strong disagreements with Seifert.

²¹³ For an account of the steps leading toward the reversal in Darré's views on biodynamic farming see Georg Halbe, "Bericht über die Entwicklung der Beziehungen zwischen dem Stabsamt des Reichsbauernführers und dem Reichsverband für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise" (BAK N1094/II/1), an undated 4 page typescript, probably from late 1940. The details of Halbe's report are corroborated by Erhard Bartsch's June 1941 SD interrogation, BA R58/6223/1: 239 and BA R58/6223/1: 299-305.

biodynamics, from Backe to agriculture expert Konrad Meyer, and for a time in the late 1930s biodynamic growers feared their methods would be forbidden.²¹⁴ Darré himself came to their aid with an announcement in January 1940 that biodynamic cultivation deserved careful consideration and could potentially constitute a legitimate and equal partner with conventional farming in “maintaining and enhancing the productive capacity of the German soil.”²¹⁵ In June 1940 the minister of agriculture was guest of honor at Bartsch’s estate in Bad Saarow. Within a year he declared that biodynamic farming was the only route to “the biological salvation of Europe.”²¹⁶

From 1940 onward Darré attempted to provide concrete support for biodynamic producers and to make organic food an integral part of Germany’s wartime economy. As his institutional power dwindled and his own position became more precarious, he went to elaborate lengths to circumvent Backe and other anti-biodynamic officials in the agriculture ministry and the Reich Food Estate. Darré and the biodynamic supporters on his staff set up a series of semi-private associations to help sustain the initiatives of Bartsch, Dreidax, Seifert and their fellows, such as the *Verein für Bauerntumskunde* and the *Gesellschaft der Freunde des deutschen Bauerntums*, with personnel chosen for their loyalty to Darré and their sympathy for biodynamics.²¹⁷ These included staff members serving in the office of the Reich

²¹⁴ On Backe’s vehement opposition to biodynamics see his 1933-42 correspondence with Darré, BAK N1094/II/20.

²¹⁵ “Um die biologisch-dynamische Düngungsweise: Eine Erklärung des Reichsernährungsministers” *Die Landware* January 20, 1940, 2.

²¹⁶ Darré to Seifert, May 28, 1941, BAK N1094/II/1. Darré often modified his claims depending on the audience and the occasion, making it difficult to determine with precision his actual attitude toward biodynamics at any given time. While he told outsiders and skeptics that he saw biodynamics as *one* way out of the crisis of industrial agriculture, not necessarily *the* way, his communications with biodynamic supporters were more pointed, portraying biodynamic agriculture as the only hope for saving the Western world.

²¹⁷ The *Verein für Bauerntumskunde* was re-named *Gesellschaft der Freunde des deutschen Bauerntums* in October 1940, with Darré as president throughout. In 1939 Darré established an “Arbeitsgemeinschaft Lebensgesetzlicher Landbau: Die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise” within the Verein für Bauerntumskunde, with Darré’s assistant and stalwart biodynamic supporter Hermann Reischle as its leader. Anthroposophist members included Erhard Bartsch, Franz Dreidax, Carl Grund, Hans Merkel, and Ernst Stegemann. The chairman of the Verein für Bauerntumskunde was

Peasant Leader and the Nazi party's Office of Agrarian Policy who were committed to biodynamic agriculture.²¹⁸ Darré adopted the phrase "lebensgesetzliche Landbauweise" or 'farming according to the laws of life' as a euphemism for biodynamics; the terms were often used interchangeably.²¹⁹ These measures showed some success for a time; in June 1941 Darré noted with satisfaction that elements within the highest leadership of the Nazi party had taken a positive view of biodynamic agriculture.²²⁰

But Darré's plans for large-scale sponsorship of biodynamic farming came to naught; in the context of the war and his own waning influence, even the concerted efforts of a Reich Minister were of little use. The meager practical outcome of such endeavors has complicated the historiographical debate over Nazi environmentalism and partly obscured the significance of the shift in official attitudes toward organic agriculture in the guise of biodynamics.²²¹ Some Nazi supporters of biodynamic

Wilhelm Kinkelin, and the Reichsgeschäftsführer of the Gesellschaft der Freunde des deutschen Bauerntums was Karl August Rust; both were proponents of biodynamic agriculture. For details see Kinkelin to Reischle, November 27, 1939, and Rust to Seifert, June 16, 1941, BAK N1094/II/1. The latter reads in part: "Zu den Hauptaufgaben der Gesellschaft gehört u. a. die Förderung des lebensgesetzlichen Landbaues auf der Basis der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise. Die Gesellschaft ist gerade hierzu besonders berufen, weil sie als unabhängige Stelle in der Lage ist, sich besonders für den lebensgesetzlichen Landbau einzusetzen."

²¹⁸ In addition to Reischle, Kinkelin, and Rust, biodynamic supporters on Darré's staff included Rudi Peuckert, Wilhelm Rauber, Günther Pacyna, Hermann Schneider, Reinhard Ohnesorge, and Wilhelm Driehaus.

²¹⁹ The 1940 RVBDW "Geschäftsbericht" referred to "lebensgesetzlichen Landbau": BA R58/6197: 143. See also Bartsch's October 1940 text "Aufbau einer in sich geschlossenen bäuerlichen Volkshochschule," BA NS15/304: 57090-57099, and Seifert's May 1941 text "Die bäuerlich-unabhängige Landbauweise" in BAK N1094/II/1.

²²⁰ Darré, "Anordnung für den persönlichen Stab" June 7, 1941, reporting that "einige Kreise in der Obersten Führung der NSDAP zu einer Bejahung der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise übergegangen sind." (BAK N1094/II/1d)

²²¹ For a variety of viewpoints see 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 Nazis and the Nature Conservationists" *The Historian* 49 (1987), 508-38; Raymond Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 81-115; Stefan Körner, *Der Aufbruch der modernen Umweltplanung in der nationalsozialistischen Landespflege* (Berlin: Technische Universität, 1995); Peter Staudenmaier, "Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and its Historical Antecedents" in Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*

methods were undoubtedly motivated by war-time concerns over the availability of raw materials rather than by any interest in esoteric worldviews. Whatever their effectiveness may have been, the actions of Nazi authorities on behalf of the biodynamic movement point to another instance of partial synthesis between anthroposophical precepts and National Socialist ambitions. The contours of this encounter can be traced in the careers of two of Darré's aides, the anthroposophists Georg Halbe and Hans Merkel.

Both Halbe and Merkel were members of the Anthroposophical Society, and both served on Darré's personal staff in the office of the Reich Peasant Leader. Halbe worked for Darré from 1935 to 1942, concentrating on publishing projects. He was a staff member at Darré's journal *Odal: Zeitschrift für Blut und Boden* and manager of the *Blut und Boden Verlag*, the Blood and Soil publishing house. One of his chief tasks as an employee of the Reich Food Estate was promoting organic farming in its biodynamic form.²²² Halbe wrote dozens of articles for a wide range of Nazi publications, including essays on biodynamic agriculture.²²³ In 1942 he planned to

(Edinburgh and San Francisco: 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; Thomas Lekan, "Regionalism and the Politics of Landscape Preservation in the Third Reich" *Environmental History* 4 (1999), 384-404; 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, "Erhaltung und Gestaltung: 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; and the forum on "The Nature of German Environmental History" in *German History* 27 (2009), 113-30.

²²² According to Halbe's handwritten *Lebenslauf* dated August 14, 1942, his work for the Reichsnährstand was above all "im Zusammenhange mit den Bestrebungen des lebensgesetzlichen Landbaues." (BA DS/A97: 660) Halbe claimed that he left the Anthroposophical Society in 1934, the year before it was dissolved.

²²³ Georg Halbe, "Lebensgesetzlicher Landbau" *Westermanns Monatshefte* November 1940, 128-30.

publish a book on the topic in Hanns Georg Müller's publishing house, but the work does not seem to have appeared in print.²²⁴ His writings drew on anthroposophical vocabulary and combined agrarian romanticism, Germanic myths, antisemitism, a fondness for holism, and an emphatic commitment to National Socialism.²²⁵ When Darré was replaced by Backe in 1942, Halbe left the agricultural apparatus and moved to the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, then in March 1944 to the Propaganda Ministry.

Halbe's colleague Hans Merkel, a specialist in agrarian law, was the other anthroposophist on Darré's staff, overseeing the personnel who worked most closely with the Reich Peasant Leader.²²⁶ Merkel was also a leader of the SS Office of Race and Settlement, the institutional embodiment of Nazi racialism and ruralism and of Darré's blood and soil doctrines.²²⁷ He published widely on agrarian policy and Nazi economics, and wrote regularly for the blood and soil journal *Odal*, combining organic

²²⁴ The prospective title was *Goethes Naturanschauung als ein Weg zum lebensgesetzlichen Landbau*; Halbe reported that it had been accepted for publication by the Müllersche Verlagshandlung. See Halbe's August 1942 "Verzeichnis umfangreicherer Aufsätze" (BA DS/A97: 664).

²²⁵ These themes recur in Halbe's works throughout his Nazi career. Georg Halbe, "Zur neuen Getreideordnung" *Deutschlands Erneuerung: Monatsschrift für das deutsche Volk* September 1934, 552-56, extols the work of Darré and his staff and condemns materialism, liberalism, Marxism, and "speculative capitalism" for ruining German agriculture before the Nazi revolution; Halbe blames this ruin on the Jews. Georg Halbe, "Die Reichsidee" *Leib und Leben* November 1942, 89-91, begins: "Der Nationalsozialismus als Idee hat – richtig begriffen – notwendig ein ganzheitliches Denken zu seiner Folge." He then singles out "der Jude" as the carrier of liberalism, materialism, and individualism, the enemies of Nazism's holistic impulse. His other works include Georg Halbe, *Die Edda* (Goslar: Blut und Boden Verlag, 1934); Halbe, "Schöpfungsgeschichte und Märchen" *Wille und Macht* May 15, 1935, 7-11; Halbe, "Von der Vollmacht des Führers" *Wille und Macht* December 1, 1936, 12-19 (*Wille und Macht* was the organ of the Hitler Youth); Halbe, "Ordnung Schicksal Treue" *Westermanns Monatshefte* December 1940, 169-72; Halbe, "Gedankenspiel um Zeit und Raum" *Westermanns Monatshefte* November 1941, 150-54; Halbe, "Odal, das Lebensgesetz eines ewigen Deutschland" *Odal* October 1935, 301-06; Halbe, "Volk und Staat" *Odal* July 1937, 15-18. Halbe also published in the *Nationalsozialistische Landpost* and the SS journal *Das schwarze Korps*. His Reichsschrifttumskammer file is in BA RK/I/216: 1879-1952.

²²⁶ Merkel's title was Stabshauptabteilungsleiter im Stabsamt des Reichsbauernführers.

²²⁷ An excellent study of the *Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS* is available in Heinemann, *Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut*. Merkel's title in the organization was Führer beim Stab des Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamts.

metaphors with calls for expanded German Lebensraum.²²⁸ Merkel was a particularly faithful spokesman for Darré's ideas and a primary proponent of biodynamic cultivation within the Nazi agricultural apparatus.²²⁹ He initially applied to join the SS in 1935 but failed the physical examination; he was made an SS officer in 1936 on special orders from Himmler.²³⁰ After the war Merkel was Darré's defense attorney at his trial in Nuremberg, and portrayed the former Reich Minister as an idealistic protector of organic farming and a revitalized peasantry. Merkel continued to work with Darré and other veterans of the Nazi agrarian bureaucracy in promoting biodynamics after 1945.²³¹

Halbe and Merkel cooperated closely with Darré's assistant Hermann Reischle, who hired both anthroposophists onto the Reich Peasant Leader's staff. Reischle

²²⁸ His works include Hans Merkel, "Gebundene Wirtschaft" *Odal* April 1935, 728-37; Merkel, "Eigentum" *Odal* January 1936, 551-60; Merkel, *Nationalsozialistische Wirtschaftsgestaltung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936); Merkel, "Die Neugestaltung des Wirtschaftsrechts im Reichsnährstand" *Jahrbuch der nationalsozialistischen Wirtschaft* 1937, 227-37; Merkel, "Die polnische Ernährungswirtschaft" *Odal* October 1939, 887-92; Merkel, "Erbhof und Pacht im Reich" *Odal* November 1940, 851-54; Merkel, *Agrarpolitik* (Leipzig: Kohlhammer, 1942); Merkel, *Deutsches Bauernrecht* (Leipzig Kohlhammer, 1944). The January 1940 issue of *Odal* praised Merkel's analysis of the changing agricultural situation as Germany defended itself against "the Jewish-oligarchic war." For a fine study of *Odal* see Andrea D'Onofrio, *Ruralismo e storia nel Terzo Reich: Il caso "Odal"* (Naples: Liguori, 1997).

²²⁹ In his handwritten *Lebenslauf* from March 8, 1938, Merkel wrote: "Ich betrachte es als meine Aufgabe im Rahmen der mir übertragenen Tätigkeitsgebiete am Aufbau eines artgemässen Rechts und einer artgemässen Wirtschaft mitzuwirken und dabei die Zielsetzungen des Nationalsozialismus und des Reichsbauernführers zu verwirklichen. Der Partei gehöre ich nicht an. Jedoch hat Reichsleiter Darré meine Aufnahme in die Partei begutachtet." (BA RS/D5477: 311) Merkel began working in the Stabsamt des Reichsbauernführers in February 1934, and in 1935 he also became Leiter of a Stabsabteilung in the Reichsnährstand; in April 1936 Himmler appointed him a Hauptabteilungsleiter in the Rassenamt of the Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS. Merkel joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1926; in 1936 he claimed to have left the Society in 1934.

²³⁰ Details are contained in Merkel's SS file, BA SSO/310A: 74-114; his SS-Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt file, BA RS/D5477: 303-500; and his Reichsnährstand file, BA DS/G179: 2735-2762.

²³¹ The voluminous post-war correspondence between Merkel and Darré can be found in BAK N1094 I/2; Merkel's defense brief and related documents from Darré's Nuremberg trial are in BAK N1094 I/1. Merkel also worked on Ohlendorf's defense team. In an unpublished post-war memoir, an undated 82 page typescript titled "Mein Lebensgang," Merkel recounted in detail his career during the Third Reich and his role in defending Darré at Nuremberg. The memoir strongly downplays his own Nazi involvement, and many of its claims are controverted by archival evidence; the text also emphasizes his consistent commitment to anthroposophy before, during, and after the Nazi era. I am indebted to Ute Merkel for providing a copy of this document.

sponsored and coordinated the pro-biodynamic grouping of Nazi agricultural functionaries from his position as head of 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. Reischle was also the founding head of the 'Race Bureau' in the SS Office of Race and Settlement and a co-founder of Himmler's *Ahnenerbe*. Much of his work focused on the racial advantages of rural re-settlement programs, bringing together the health of the nation and the health of the soil, and he was also a major figure in planning the "Germanization" of territories to be conquered in the East.²³² With Reischle's assistance, biodynamic representatives were able to publicize their views in the mainstream Nazi press.²³³ Powerful Nazi organizations, such as Ley's German Labor Front, pledged their support.²³⁴ Bartsch and his colleagues gained notable sympathy and interest from the highest echelons of the party.²³⁵ Once the war started, Darré arranged to have biodynamic leaders like Bartsch

²³² Reischle joined the NSDAP in 1931 and the SS in 1932. Details on his career can be found in his SS file, BA SSO/21B: 1020-1137, and his Reichsnährstand file, BA DS/G131: 2475-2492; for context cf. Heinemann, *Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut*, 88-89, 114-16, 127-28, 631. His titles included Hauptamtsleiter im Amt für Agrarpolitik bei der Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Reichskommissar im Reichsernährungsministerium, Stabsamtsführer im Reichsnährstand, Chef des Rassenamtes im SS-Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt, stellvertretender Kurator des SS-Ahnenerbes, Führer im Persönlichen Stab des Reichsführers-SS, and Führer beim Stab des SS-Personalhauptamtes. For examples of his publications see 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, "Neubildung deutschen Bauerntums" *Neues Bauerntum* June 1939; Reischle, *Nationalsozialistische Agrarpolitik* (Münster: Cöpppenrath, 1941).

²³³ See e.g. Wilhelm Rauber, "Bauern 'kraft Gesetzes' oder wesenhaftes Bauerntum? Gedanken über die Notwendigkeit eines lebensgesetzlichen Landbaus" *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* November 1940, 676-82; cf. Erhard Bartsch, "Vom Wesen des Betriebsorganismus" *Odal* April 1940, 287-90, and Erhard Bartsch, "Der Erbhof Marienhöhe: Ein Beispiel lebensgesetzlicher Landbauweise" *Odal* September 1940, 695-701.

²³⁴ In his June 1941 interrogation Bartsch claimed that in 1940 the DAF agreed to give the RVBDW 100,000 Reichsmark over a five year period; it is unclear if any of the funds were disbursed. (BA R58/6223/1: 240)

²³⁵ See e.g. Bartsch's 1939-1940 correspondence with Ilse Hess, wife of Rudolf Hess, BA R9349/2/H; cf. Rudolf Hess to Alwin Seifert, November 14, 1938, BA R58/6223/1: 318; Reischle to Keitel, October 25, 1940, BA R58/6223/1: 328. For Darré's extremely friendly 1941 correspondence with Seifert as an ally in promoting biodynamics see BAK N1094/II/1. Even Hitler's vegetable garden at Obersalzberg was farmed biodynamically; see Seifert to Lippert, October 13, 1937, BA R9349/3/S, and zur Linden, *Blick durchs Prisma*, 247.

and Dreidax exempted from military service.²³⁶ Even with the backing of Darré, however, 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. SD agents considered biodynamic methods occultist 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.”²³⁷ 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 and other representatives of the movement were 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 various projects, including ‘settlement’ plans in the occupied East.²³⁸ Biodynamic leaders saw the war as their chance to step forward in support of the German cause, as a long-awaited opportunity for their movement to prove its worth to the nation, and as an auspicious occasion to re-shape Eastern lands along biodynamic lines.²³⁹ As early as October 1939, a month after the invasion of

²³⁶ BA R58/6223/1: 320; BA RK/118: 11914; BA RK/185: 1990. It is worth noting that both Bartsch and Merkel tried to join the Nazi party; it is unclear what became of either attempt.

²³⁷ July 6, 1941 SD report on the Reichsverband für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise, BA R58/6223/1: 242.

²³⁸ For examples see the memorandum by Nicolaus Remer of the RVBDW, dated Posen, December 19, 1939, and Hermann Schneider to Heinrich Himmler, December 9, 1939, both in BA R9349/3; the May 9, 1940 report by Heinrich Vogel on biodynamics and SS *Siedlungen*, BA NS3/1175; Bartsch to Hess, November 9, 1940, BA R58/6223/1: 310. Nicolaus Remer helped oversee agricultural production in the occupied Ukraine in 1941 and 1942.

²³⁹ See e.g. the September 16, 1939 “Entwurf eines Briefes an Generalfeldmarschall Göring” in BA R9349/2/G, and Fritz Hoffmann, “Lebensgesetzliche Grundlagen” *Leib und Leben* November 1940, 109-10. For context see Rolf Dieter Müller, *Hitlers Ostkrieg und die deutsche Siedlungspolitik: Die*

Poland, the SS requisitioned a large estate in the occupied province of Posen to turn it into an agricultural training facility based on biodynamic principles, with the active cooperation of the RVBDW leadership.²⁴⁰ Himmler's own attitude toward biodynamic farming remained ambivalent; he rejected its anthroposophical foundations but appreciated its practical potential. After the June 1941 crackdown, 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.²⁴¹ The term Himmler and his associates used to designate biodynamic agriculture was "natural farming" (*naturgemäßer Landbau*).

Two of Himmler's most powerful 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 made the agency an important part of 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 so-called *Wehrbauern* or '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. Prior to June 1941, the SS sent its personnel to attend courses provided

Zusammenarbeit von Wehrmacht, Wirtschaft und SS (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1991) and Robert Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

²⁴⁰ Pancke to Himmler, November 20, 1939, BA NS2/60: 51-59. The SS expropriated the estate as an *SS Lehrgut* to be run on biodynamic lines (its Polish owner was shot "wegen Deutschfeindlichkeit"). For a very different account, evidently referring to the same incident, see Schmidt, ed., *Der landwirtschaftliche Impuls Rudolf Steiners*, 31. Pancke, Darré's successor as head of the SS Office of Race and Settlement, reported that the Reich Food Estate recommended biodynamic cultivation for the annexed Eastern territories because it required no artificial fertilizers. Pancke also noted that the "minderrassische" Polish population of the new 'settlement' areas was to be evacuated as soon as possible. For Bartsch's views on properly Germanic peasant training see Erhard Bartsch, "Der bäuerliche Erziehungsweg des deutschen Menschen" September 23, 1940, BA NS15/304: 57101-57108.

²⁴¹ Himmler to Pohl, June 18, 1941, BA NS19/3122: 83; Brandt to Vogel, March 2, 1942, BA NS19/3122: 38.

by the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture. In 1940 Pancke tried to make Bartsch an SS officer to help realize these plans, but was blocked by Heydrich.²⁴²

Pancke's colleague Oswald Pohl was in charge of the economic enterprises of the SS and administrator of the concentration camp system. Pohl was a friend of Seifert and an active supporter of biodynamic agriculture, and had his own estate farmed biodynamically. He sent Himmler literature from the movement to demonstrate its value to the SS.²⁴³ In January 1939 Himmler created a new SS corporation under Pohl's supervision, the *Deutsche Versuchsanstalt für Ernährung und Verpflegung* (German Research Facility for Food and Nutrition), known as the DVA.²⁴⁴ A substantial portion of its operations consisted of agricultural plantations located at concentration camps, including Auschwitz, Dachau, and Ravensbrück, as well as estates in occupied Eastern Europe and in Germany. Many of these agricultural projects were biodynamic plantations growing products for the SS and the German military, with production monitored by RVBDW representatives. Ravensbrück was

²⁴² Pancke to Pohl, February 29, 1940, BA PK/A199: 2778; Pancke to Heydrich, January 8, 1940, BA PK/A199: 2780. Pancke told Heydrich that he wanted to make Bartsch an SS officer because biodynamic farming was the sole appropriate cultivation method "für die zukünftigen Wehrbauern und Bauern im Osten." For background on Pancke see Heinemann, *Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut*, 115-16, 122-28, 628. In addition to his duties at the SS Office of Race and Settlement, in 1939 Pancke was appointed liaison between the *Führerhauptquartier* and the Einsatzgruppen and SS-*Totenkopfverbänden*.

²⁴³ Pohl to Himmler, June 17, 1940, BA NS19/3122: 80. Pohl first visited Bartsch's estate at Marienhöhe in December 1939. For background see Enno Georg, *Die wirtschaftlichen Unternehmungen der SS* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1963); Richard Breitman, *Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 86-87, 199-200; Hermann Kaienburg, "KZ-Haft und Wirtschaftsinteresse: Das Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt der SS als Leitungszentrale der Konzentrationslager und der SS-Wirtschaft" in Hermann Kaienburg, ed., *Konzentrationslager und deutsche Wirtschaft 1939 – 1945* (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1996), 29-60; Walter Naasner, *SS-Wirtschaft und SS-Verwaltung* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1998); Jan Erik Schulte, *Zwangsarbeit und Vernichtung: Das Wirtschaftsimperium der SS. Oswald Pohl und das SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt 1933-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2001); Michael Thad Allen, *The Business of Genocide: The SS, Slave Labor, and the Concentration Camps* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Pohl was convicted at Nuremberg of crimes against humanity and executed in 1951.

²⁴⁴ A selection of documents on the DVA can be found in Peter-Ferdinand Koch, *Himmlers graue Eminenz: Oswald Pohl und das Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt der SS* (Hamburg: Facta Oblita, 1988), 78-81, 300. For detailed context see Hermann Kaienburg, *Die Wirtschaft der SS* (Berlin: Metropol, 2003).

the first DVA estate to be converted to biodynamic cultivation, in May 1940.²⁴⁵

Eventually the majority of the DVA's plantations were run biodynamically. The DVA also marketed Demeter products, cooperated with Weleda, and contributed financially to the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture.²⁴⁶ Pohl recruited several leading RVBDW figures, including Max Karl Schwarz and Nicolaus Remer, to work on the biodynamic enterprises at Auschwitz, though Bormann and Heydrich protested the employment of anthroposophists in SS ventures.²⁴⁷

The head of the DVA's agricultural section was SS officer Heinrich Vogel, an outspoken proponent of biodynamics even in the face of resistance from other sectors of the SS. He and Pohl insisted on relying on Bartsch's anthroposophical colleagues, and in July 1941 the SD relented, with the assurance that former RVBDW members would not spread Steiner's teachings.²⁴⁸ 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, a leader of the biodynamic movement from its beginnings and head gardener at Weleda from 1924 to 1940.²⁴⁹ Shortly after

²⁴⁵ See Bernhard Strebel, *Das KZ Ravensbrück: Geschichte eines Lagerkomplexes* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003), 212-13. Pohl's own estate at Comthurey was located near Ravensbrück. Further information on SS biodynamic plantations is available in Georg, *Die wirtschaftlichen Unternehmungen der SS*, 62-66, and Kaienburg, *Die Wirtschaft der SS*, 771-855, as well as the detailed monograph by 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).

²⁴⁶ BA R58/6197/1: 162.

²⁴⁷ 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; cf. also Bartsch's statement in BA R58/6223/1: 304.

²⁴⁸ July 11, 1941 SD report on Reichsverband für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise, BA R58/6223/1: 200; Aktennotiz July 7, 1941, BA R58/6223/1: 209; Vermerk July 24, 1941, BA R58/6223/1: 208.

²⁴⁹ Lippert (1901-1949) joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1922 and took part in Steiner's 1924 course on agriculture, the founding event of the biodynamic movement. In addition to his crucial work at Weleda, his active involvement in the biodynamic movement continued after 1945. I discuss post-war anthroposophist claims about Lippert's career at Dachau in the Conclusion.

taking over the Dachau plantation Lippert joined the SS, and in 1944 received special recognition and a bonus for his work there.²⁵⁰ Lippert also published a book for the SS in 1942 based on his work at Weleda and Dachau.²⁵¹

One of the tasks of the Dachau biodynamic plantation was to train ‘settlers’ for the Eastern territories, part of Himmler’s plans to use biodynamic cultivation in the environmental and ethnic re-ordering of the East.²⁵² Biodynamic leaders participated actively in these efforts, obtaining preferential treatment from the DVA and other SS agencies in return.²⁵³ In addition to Bartsch, Schwarz, and Remer, this initiative included figures like Darré’s ally Rudi Peuckert, who supplied forced labor from occupied lands for war-time agricultural production in 1942, and anthroposophist SS officer Carl Grund, who was specially commissioned by Himmler to assess biodynamic farming in the conquered Russian provinces in 1943.²⁵⁴ On Himmler’s

²⁵⁰ In September 1944 Lippert was listed as one of the DVA’s “besonders verdiente Mitarbeiter” and received a “Leistungsprämie” of 500 Reichsmark for his work at the Dachau plantation: BA NS3/1430: 114. His SS file (BA SM/L40: 623-630) is fragmentary and partially damaged, and his date of entry into the SS is unclear. By April 1942 his SS unit was Pohl’s main office, the WVHA, the central bureau of economic administration for the SS and the concentration camps and parent organization to the DVA. For details on the Dachau plantation cf. Robert Sigel, “Heilkräuterkulturen im KZ: Die Plantage in Dachau” *Dachauer Hefie* 4 (1988), 164-73; Jacobeit and Kopke, *Die Biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise im KZ*, 87-112; Walter Wuttke-Groneberg, “Von Heidelberg nach Dachau” in Gerhard Baader, ed., *Medizin und Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Verlagsgesellschaft Gesundheit, 1980), 113-38, particularly the section “Die Heilkräuterplantage im KZ Dachau,” 116-20; Kaienburg, *Die Wirtschaft der SS*, 782-94; Daniella Seidl, “Zwischen Himmel und Hölle”: *Das Kommando ‘Plantage’ des Konzentrationslagers Dachau* (Munich: Utz, 2008). According to a December 1939 DVA report, the Dachau plantation was built by camp inmates, “mainly Jews and Gypsies” (BA NS3/1433: 133).

²⁵¹ Franz Lippert, *Das Wichtigste in Kürze über Kräuter und Gewürze* (Berlin: Nordland Verlag, 1943). Nordland Verlag was the SS publishing house. The book was co-published by the DVA.

²⁵² On the role of the SS *Heilkräuterkulturen* at Dachau in training “Siedler für den Osten” see BA NS3/1175: 57; on Himmler’s plans to use biodynamics in the “Neugestaltung der deutschen Ostgebiete” see Seifert to Bodenstedt, April 2, 1941, BAK N1094/II/1.

²⁵³ See e.g. Harald Kabisch to Heinrich Himmler, November 14, 1941, asking to be given oversight of an estate in annexed Polish territory “im Rahmen der Siedlungsbestrebungen im Osten” (BA PK/F223: 2512). In March 1941 the DVA offered RVBDW members discount prices on their Dachau products, explaining: “Der Kräutergarten der Deutschen Versuchsanstalt, Werk Dachau, wird rein biologisch-dynamisch bewirtschaftet und liefert Pflanzenmaterial der sämtlichen deutschen Heil- und Gewürzpflanzen.” (BA R58/6223/1: 365)

²⁵⁴ In June 1942 Peuckert served as the “Beauftragter für die Landwirtschaft und Kriegsernährungswirtschaft beim Generalbevollmächtigten für den Arbeitseinsatz” (i.e. Fritz Sauckel, Peuckert’s longtime friend and comrade), and in this capacity was very active in the occupied territories: BA RS/E556: 2354. In October 1943 Carl Grund was entrusted with a “Sonderauftrag des

orders, Grund was given a variety of special tasks and prerogatives as an expert for “natural farming” in the East. After Heydrich’s assassination in June 1942, Himmler directed that former RVBDW members be engaged in the re-organization of agriculture in the Eastern territories and thus contribute to the “practical work of reconstruction” being carried out by German forces.²⁵⁵ 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.²⁵⁶

Whether presented as “farming according to the laws of life” or as “natural farming” or as a trustworthy method for restoring the health and fertility of the German soil and the German people, biodynamic cultivation found amenable partners in the Nazi hierarchy. It augured the return of a balanced relationship between the German nation and the German landscape, a regenerated community living in harmony with nature. In this way anthroposophical ideas and practices had their most direct and concrete impact on Nazi policies. Indeed the Third Reich can be seen as the time when biodynamic agriculture received its most significant levels of state support and achieved its most impressive status among high officials.²⁵⁷ In historical

Reichsführers-SS zur Prüfung der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise im russischen Raum”:
Vogel to Brandt, Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer-SS, October 29, 1943, BA NS19/3122: 27-28.

²⁵⁵ Vogel to Brandt, May 15, 1943, “Betrifft: Prüfung des naturgemäßen Landbaues (früher biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise)” BA NS19/3122: 35. Grund and his colleagues ran the “Staatsgut Wertingen” in formerly Polish territory from autumn 1942 onward, while other biodynamic representatives were put in charge of the “Staatsgüterverwaltung Schitomir.” See also BA NS19/3122: 32 and 36.

²⁵⁶ See the September 12, 1944 DVA report on the SS’s ongoing commitment to “der biologisch-dynamischen (natürlichen) Landbauweise” BA NS3/722: 8-9. The DVA was still using Weleda materials in October 1944: BA NS3/1430: 102. See also the September 1944 WVHA files on the DVA in BA NS3/1427. The January 1945 report on the DVA in BA NS3/722 shows how important their biodynamic projects were even at this late stage.

²⁵⁷ Retrospective anthroposophical accounts sometimes obliquely acknowledge this, noting for example the considerable increase in biodynamic production during the Nazi era. Wilhelm zur Linden, chairman of the *Verein zur Förderung der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise* in Berlin and a close associate of Bartsch, claims that there were 2000 biodynamic farms and gardens in Germany by 1940 (zur Linden, *Blick durchs Prisma*, 247). Such figures are difficult to verify, but the annual reports of the *Reichsverband für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise* do indicate a steady rise in activity and confidence from 1933 onward. Other post-war anthroposophical claims can be confirmed through archival evidence, such as Demeter supplying the Rudolf Hess Hospital with biodynamic products; see

perspective, these factors overshadow the more salacious particulars of Weleda's unwitting involvement in 'human experimentation' at the Dachau concentration camp, events which have sometimes been occasion for media scandals in post-war Germany.²⁵⁸ While perhaps less sensational, the quotidian details of the biodynamic movement's intertwinement with Nazi environmental endeavors are more historically illuminating. Attending to these details does not mean disregarding or downplaying Nazism's enormously destructive impact on the European environment. It means taking seriously the countervailing proto-ecological tendencies within the Nazi regime, many of which sustained high levels of support from various sectors of the polycracy for a remarkably long time and were notably successful on their own terms. These Nazi initiatives – around environmentally sensitive public works, organic agriculture, habitat protection, and so forth – were not mere camouflage or peculiar deviations from the destructive path of the Nazi juggernaut; they were part and parcel of the Nazi project for remaking the landscape of Europe, ethnically as well as ecologically. Ignoring their impact yields an impaired comprehension of the full

the 1934 RVBDW *Geschäftsbericht*, BA R58/6197/1: 192. These achievements were not always attributed to cooperation between anthroposophists and Nazis; Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 362, quotes the head of Weleda crediting supernatural forces for preserving the enterprise intact throughout the entire Nazi period.

²⁵⁸ The Weleda case became briefly notorious in the 1990s with the appearance of journalists' reports on the company's relationship to SS doctor and war criminal Sigmund Rascher, who performed infamous 'medical experiments' at Dachau involving the torture and death of many inmates. Rascher (1909-1945) was the estranged son of anthroposophist Hanns Rascher and attended the original Waldorf school in his youth; as an adult he vehemently rejected anthroposophical doctrine while maintaining friendly contacts with anthroposophists, including his uncle, Fritz Rascher. Weleda supplied biodynamic materials for Rascher's 'experiments' at Dachau, but the company insists that its staff was unaware of what its products were being used for. This claim is plausible, but overlooks the more significant fact that Weleda maintained ongoing business relationships with the SS and the Wehrmacht in order to keep Rascher supplied with the anthroposophical materials he requested. In order to manufacture the biodynamic materials that Rascher ordered, Weleda was given special access to the SS's own stock of petroleum jelly, a rare commodity in war-time Germany. Aside from his uncle, Rascher was also on very good terms with anthroposophists such as Otto Lerchenfeld and Franz Lippert, and was an active proponent of biodynamics. He was a keen student of anthroposophist Ehrenfried Pfeiffer's work on biodynamics, publishing an article on the subject in 1936, and he recommended biodynamic literature to Himmler. Extensive material on Rascher can be found in BA NS21/921a, BA NS21/915, BA NS21/916, and BA NS21/925.

dimensions of that project and its attempted implementation under the banner of blood and soil. Steiner's followers played no small part in trying to bring that project to fruition.

Conclusion: 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 both on the specific choices anthroposophists made and on a broad spectrum of factors beyond their control. Nazi rhetoric adapted existing tropes and terms from general German culture, a fraught process which simultaneously provided opportunities for would-be fellow travelers and presented hazards to both sides of the uneven partnership. The gaps between Nazi rhetoric and Nazi practice introduced further ambiguities. Anthroposophist organizations and individuals reacted to this situation in different ways.

In the case of anthroposophical medicine and biodynamic farming, a move from esoteric to exoteric facilitated the acceptance of practices founded on occult precepts, as their proponents placed the concrete potential and the ideological suitability of these practices squarely in the foreground. The perception of the Anthroposophical Society and the Christian Community as 'worldview organizations,' on the other hand, impeded their acceptance in a state that had no room for a plurality of worldviews. Still, many anthroposophists accommodated themselves to the Nazi regime or actively participated in its endeavors, whether out of conviction, opportunism, or dedication to the survival of Steiner's movement. But regardless of their outlook or conduct, anthroposophists faced persecution from those sectors of the regime that viewed alternative spiritual groups, and particularly occultists, as enemies of and obstacles to National Socialism's totalitarian aims.

When faced with unremitting opposition from anti-esoteric Nazis, anthroposophists as a whole did not retreat into the private world of spiritual theory, but focused instead on practice, demonstratively urging the practical usefulness of Waldorf schools, anthroposophical medicine, and biodynamic agriculture for the New Germany. Nor did Steiner's followers introduce or specially highlight 'Germanic' themes after January 1933; these themes had been central to anthroposophy all along.²⁵⁹ Many anthroposophists distrusted democracy and sympathized with national and authoritarian alternatives, and more than a few anthroposophist spokespeople condemned the Weimar republic and endorsed the Third Reich. The chance to contribute concretely to the re-construction of the German national spirit appealed strongly to these predispositions, and made the dawn of Hitler's regime seem as much a promise as a threat.

These initially decisive factors, however, were soon displaced as the available room for maneuver within the public space of the Third Reich narrowed and all but disappeared, even for those occultists whose standpoint on Nazism was not hesitant or ambivalent. Particularly after 1935, the problematic of accommodation and collaboration was cast in a different light, for anthroposophists as for other minority spiritual tendencies. Proven fidelity to the German cause was not enough to mollify Heydrich and Bormann and their fellows, and the protection of figures like Hess and Darré could not outlast their fall from grace. In this context, the anthroposophical emphasis on practical benefit to the national community constituted both an opportunity for advancement and a survival strategy. Anthroposophists thus reconfigured their expectations as the Third Reich developed, with some hoping

²⁵⁹ In addition to the numerous examples in the previous chapter, see the report on the October 1932 conference "Rudolf Steiner und der deutsche Geist," co-sponsored by the Anthroposophical Society in Germany and the Goetheanum and held at the Haus des Deutschtums in Stuttgart, in *Anthroposophie* October 1932, 89-90; cf. the disquisition by anthroposophist Moritz Bartsch on "wesenhaftes Deutschtum" and its "wahre vaterländische Aufgabe" in *Demeter* August 1932, 150-51.

merely to endure the Nazi era and others exploiting the occasion to promote their own projects. As messianic longings were reduced to prosaic organizational politicking, 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 its early phase of oppositional radicalism, transformed from a movement into a state, and settled down to the business of trying to run the country. Some Nazi leaders attempted to appropriate particular aspects of anthroposophical thought and practice, while others pursued their suppression. 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.

In several respects, conceptual affinities both facilitated and interfered with practical convergence between anthroposophy and National Socialism, through a complex dynamic which reveals the underlying contours of the engagement and confrontation between authoritarian regimes and esoteric worldviews. Nazi perceptions of and reactions to anthroposophy were governed by a dialectic of otherworldliness and this-worldliness: Nazis who found aspects of anthroposophy appealing focused on its concrete practical manifestations such as Waldorf schooling, biodynamic farming, or anthroposophical medicine, and were indifferent at best to their esoteric underpinnings. Nazi opponents of anthroposophy focused not on its practical applications but on its otherworldly ideas, highlighted its occult character and faulted it for ideological autonomy, for anchoring its claims in access to Higher Powers rather than submitting entirely to National Socialism as the only higher power.

Anthroposophist perceptions of and responses to Nazism revolved around differing conceptions of spiritual renewal and of the mission of the German spirit in

the world. Some anthroposophists saw National Socialism as a harbinger of spiritual regeneration and restoration and an embodiment of the German mission to transform and redeem humankind, and viewed Nazism as a potential vehicle for their own particular aims, whether in the fields of pedagogy, agriculture, medicine, or religion. Other anthroposophists saw National Socialism as a threat to the proper re-spiritualization of Germany, as a form of materialism or of perverted spirituality, and viewed Hitler's movement as a misappropriation and misconstrual of the German mission to heal the world, as competition for their own claims to spiritual guidance. In both cases, anthroposophists did not simply adopt 'national' themes as an ad hoc response to the pressures and expectations of the regime, but built on a long tradition of Germanic tropes within anthroposophical thought, beginning with Steiner himself. The same is true of anthroposophy's emphasis on anti-materialism and anti-intellectualism and its racial and ethnic doctrines. The shared ideological field linking esoteric beliefs to National Socialist principles harbored both the possibility for cooperation and mutual support as well as the risk of contamination and corruption.

Thus there was no such thing as the reaction of "the Nazis" to esoteric groups, or of "the anthroposophists" – much less "the occultists" – to Nazism. Their interactions were complex and context-dependent and developed in contrary directions simultaneously. Under historical scrutiny, the notion that esotericists attempted to tame Nazism or fight it with spiritual means, or that occult forces themselves spawned Hitler's regime, gives way to a more mundane reality in the case of anthroposophy. The multivalent affiliations among *Lebensreform* tendencies, alternative sub-cultures, esoteric spirituality, *völkisch* traditions, and myriad holistic and nature-oriented beliefs and practices provided one of the unsteady stages on which the fitful and irregular development of Nazism played itself out. However inadvertently and inconsistently, many of these dignified discourses of spiritual emancipation and cultural

transformation, many of these efforts toward holism, toward transcendence, toward renewal and regeneration and healing the ravages of materialism and redeeming humanity, converged with deeply regressive political realities.

Chapter 4

The German Essence Shall Heal the World:

Ideological Affinities Between Anthroposophy and Nazism

The process known as *Gleichschaltung*, the ‘coordination’ or synchronization of public organizations under National Socialist auspices, involved 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 outright.¹ By the same token, broad sectors of German society found various aspects of Nazism potentially appealing and other aspects objectionable. The construction of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*, the people’s community or national community, depended on gaining the practical support and ideological acceptance of substantial portions of the populace.² Nazism fostered allegiance to its principles and goals not

¹ For background on *Gleichschaltung* 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 nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft 1933/34” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 4 (1956), 30-42; William Shirer, “The Nazification of Germany: 1933-34” in Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 188-230; Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich* (London: Longman, 1981); Gerhard Schulz, “Die Gleichschaltung des öffentlichen Lebens” in Wolfgang Treue and Jürgen Schmäddeke, eds., *Deutschland 1933: Machtzerfall der Demokratie und nationalsozialistische “Machtergreifung”* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1984), 65-96; Volker Dahm, “Nationale Einheit und partikuläre Vielfalt: Zur Frage der kulturpolitischen Gleichschaltung im Dritten Reich” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 43 (1995), 221-65; Roderick Stackelberg, “The Nazi consolidation of power, 1933-34” in Stackelberg, *Hitler’s Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies* (London: Routledge, 1999), 100-18; Richard Evans, “Bringing Germany into line” in Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 375-90. Aside from its integrative aspects, the process of *Gleichschaltung* eliminated not only ostensibly recalcitrant or dangerous organizations, but entirely harmless ones as well; Nazi officials banned groups such as the *Kommission für deutsche Hundezucht*, the *Reichsverband für das deutsche Katzenwesen*, and the *Gesellschaft zur Bekämpfung übertragbarer Krankheiten*. See the Gestapo file on “Maßnahmen gegen unpolitische Organisationen 1934-1942” (BA R58/1029).

² A perceptive analysis of this process is available in Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); see also Gellately, *Backing Hitler*. Recent scholarship emphasizes the centrality of the notion of ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ to National Socialism; cf. Jane Caplan, ed., *Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Michael Wildt, *Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus* (Stuttgart: UTB, 2008); Winfried and Dietmar Süß, eds., *Das “Dritte Reich”*: *Eine Einführung* (Munich: Siedler, 2008). For further context on Nazi conceptions of the

just by a simple mechanism of repression, but through a complex process of appropriating and re-working themes already present within the broader terrain of German culture and thought. 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.

The idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft* or national community was not a Nazi invention; the term was widely used before 1933, and often incorporated notions of blood and race as part of national belonging.³ In its liberal, socialist, conservative and *völkisch* 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. Anthroposophist invocations of national integrity emphasized the unique importance of the "German essence," an expression which also played a notable role in Nazi rhetoric.⁴ Well before 1933, anthroposophist publications

Volksgemeinschaft see Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*; Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Hans-Ulrich Thamer, "Nation als Volksgemeinschaft: Völkische Vorstellungen, Nationalsozialismus und Gemeinschaftsideologie" in Jörg-Dieter Gauger and Klaus Weigelt, eds., *Soziales Denken in Deutschland zwischen Tradition und Innovation* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1990), 112-28; Martyn Housden, *Resistance and Conformity in the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 1997); 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; Lisa Pine, *Hitler's "National Community": Society and Culture in Nazi Germany* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2007); Frank Bajohr and Michael Wildt, eds., *Volksgemeinschaft: Neue Forschungen zur Gesellschaft des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2009).

³ For a fine overview see Norbert Götz, "Volksgemeinschaft" in Ingo Haar, ed., *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften: Personen, Institutionen, Forschungsprogramme, Stiftungen* (Munich: Saur, 2008), 713-21. Even with its remarkable breadth and lability, the idea was easily adapted to Nazi purposes; indeed pre-Nazi conceptions of the "Volksgemeinschaft" displayed a considerable degree of continuity with Nazi conceptions: compare Walkenhorst, *Nation - Volk - Rasse*, 86-98; Michael Wildt, "'Volksgemeinschaft' in der politischen Kommunikation der Weimarer Republik" in Bajohr and Wildt, eds., *Volksgemeinschaft*, 24-40; Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 654-59.

⁴ On the importance of the notion of "deutsches Wesen" to Nazi cultural politics, particularly before 1933, see Peter Reichel, *Der schöne Schein des Dritten Reiches: Faszination und Gewalt des Faschismus* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1993), 86-87; the term was also prevalent in Hitler's writings and speeches. Jost Hermand's analysis of the varieties of *völkisch* hopes for the Nazi revolution notes: "This brief glimpse into the workings of the 'new spirit' in Germany after 1933 shows that the national

featured the nineteenth century 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.⁵ These sorts of general ideological affinity between anthroposophy and Nazism assisted the practical cooperation that developed around Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, anthroposophical medicine, and other projects, but the very same affinities provoked scorn from Nazi officials who were skeptical of occultism.⁶

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, and sometimes Freemasonry and Judaism. They also shared positive goals, including a commitment to fundamental spiritual renewal and the conviction of a decisive German historical mission. In their contradictory details, the conceptual affiliations between the two otherwise disparate movements reveal an underappreciated aspect of the convergence of Nazism with *Lebensreform* aspirations and ‘alternative’ subcultures, both esoteric

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. See also Jansen, “‘Deutsches Wesen’ – ‘Deutsche Seele’ – ‘Deutscher Geist’.”

⁵ Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 299. According to Eksteins, 80, the line “am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen” originated with the poet Emanuel Geibel (1815-1884); it may have first appeared in his 1861 poem “Deutschlands Beruf.” The locus classicus for the image of Germany as the source of the regeneration of the world is Fichte’s *Addresses to the German Nation* from 1807-1808.

⁶ See the harshly negative undated SD report titled “Die Grundlagen der Theosophie” which quotes the phrase “Am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen” as an example of theosophical attempts to appropriate German nationalist themes (BA R58/6199/3: 381). Further examples are examined in chapter 6 below.

and exoteric. Focused on phenomena such as vegetarianism, organic food, unconventional therapies, educational reform, back-to-the-land movements and unorthodox spirituality, these tendencies offered a bridge between Nazism and various alternative milieus. This supposedly ‘softer’ side of Nazi politics and culture, often unnoticed or unrecognized, helps explain the extent of interchange between occult visions and the practical application of Nazi policies. It is tempting to see this history as an illustration of the anti-modernist elements of Nazi thought, but its proponents and practitioners did not share such a view. In their own eyes, the projects and proposals they championed exemplified a simultaneous embrace of the modern world and a rejection of the corrupt and damaging effects of its debased forms.⁷

What had debased modern life, for many anthroposophists, was a series of un-German influences which corroded both soul and society and impeded proper spiritual

⁷ Erhard Bartsch’s text “Der bäuerliche Erziehungsweg des deutschen Menschen” (BA NS15/304: 57101-57108), which he sent to Nazi officials in September 1940, provides a case in point. The opening paragraph denounces “die zersetzenden Kräfte der Mechanisierung und städtischen Zivilisation,” but on the very next page Bartsch declares that the healthy German child must “als moderner Mensch in die sozialen Zusammenhänge des modernen Lebens hineinwachsen,” and the document concludes by resoundingly endorsing “das moderne organische Bewusstsein” and praising the ideal of “einer modernen lebensgesetzlichen Kultur.” Whether under anthroposophist or Nazi auspices, this conspicuous synthesis of organicism, natural law ideology, anti-urbanism and *Zivilisationskritik* with a professed commitment to the modern deserves more historical attention than it has heretofore received. For context see Pier Paolo Portinaro, “Kulturpessimismus und die Grenzen der Entzauberung: Diagnosen zu Technik, Kultur und Politik nach der Jahrhundertwende” in vom Bruch, Graf, and Hübinger, eds., *Kultur und Kulturwissenschaften um 1900*, 175-96; Louis Dupeux, “‘Kulturpessimismus’, Konservative Revolution und Modernität” in Gangl and Raulet, eds., *Intellektuellendiskurse in der Weimarer Republik*, 287-300; Klaus Bergmann, *Agrarromantik und Großstadtfeindschaft* (Meisenheim: Hain, 1970); Hans-Joachim Lieber, *Kulturkritik und Lebensphilosophie: Studien zur deutschen Philosophie der Jahrhundertwende* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974); Stephen Kalberg, “The Origin and Expansion of *Kulturpessimismus*: The Relationship between Public and Private Spheres in Early Twentieth Century Germany” *Sociological Theory* 5 (1987), 150-64; Anne Harrington, “Metaphoric Connections: Holistic Science in the Shadow of the Third Reich” *Social Research* 62 (1995), 357–85; Thomas Rohkrämer, *Eine andere Moderne? Zivilisationskritik, Natur und Technik in Deutschland 1880-1933* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1999); Thomas Rohkrämer, “Cultural Criticism in Germany 1880–1933: A Typology” *History of European Ideas* 25 (1999), 321-39; Barbara Besslich, *Wege in den “Kulturkrieg”*: *Zivilisationskritik in Deutschland 1890-1914* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000); Andrew Lees, *Cities, Sin, and Social Reform in Imperial Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); Georg Bollenbeck, *Eine Geschichte der Kulturkritik* (Munich: Beck, 2007); Bernhard Dietz, “Countryside-versus-City in European Thought: German and British Anti-Urbanism between the Wars” *The European Legacy* 13 (2008), 801-14.

development. Drawing on older esoteric traditions, Steiner's followers propounded a "harmony of body, soul, and spirit," but saw this ideal endangered by invasive and alien forces from the West and East.⁸ To counter such tendencies, a vindication of German values was necessary. The German people had been spiritually appointed "to fulfill the very highest world tasks," a leading anthroposophist declared in 1934, and these tasks were counterposed to the menacing potential of Russia, Asia, America, France, England, and the "world-dominating Anglo-Saxons."⁹ The next stage in cosmic spiritual development, anthroposophists maintained, "can only be born from the German essence, or else it will be withheld from the world."¹⁰ For others, anthroposophy itself was a bastion of Germandom holding fast against "anti-German tendencies" which threatened to undermine the achievements of National Socialism.¹¹ From this perspective, the rise of Nazism seemed initially promising, and anthroposophist publications in 1933 printed several expressions of emphatic enthusiasm for the New Germany.¹²

⁸ See Erhard Bartsch, "Aufbau einer in sich geschlossenen bäuerlichen Volkshochschule," October 21, 1940, which proclaims the ideal of an "Einklang von Körper, Seele und Geist." (BA NS15/304: 57096)

⁹ Rittelmeyer, *Deutschtum*, 7, 20. Rittelmeyer also expounds on the special mysteries of German blood and on "arteigene Religion." 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.

¹⁰ Robert Goebel, "Eine deutsche Zukunftsaufgabe" *Die Christengemeinschaft* June 1933, 68-70, quote on 70. Anthroposophist Richard Dürich similarly insisted that "die ganze Welt braucht das deutsche Geistesgut [...] als der Führer zu einem neuen, lebendigen Bewußtsein." Dürich to Leitung der Staatspolizei, Berlin, November 28, 1935, BA R58/6193/2: 558-560.

¹¹ "Das Wesentliche über die Geisteswissenschaft Rudolf Steiners" (BA NS15/301: 58198-58204), unsigned and undated, probably 1937. The author writes that anthroposophy is compatible with National Socialism and asks the leadership of the Third Reich to protect Steiner's movement from its enemies, who are the enemies of Germany. Anthroposophists "stellen sich mit voller Offenheit und mit Liebe zu ihrem Vaterland dem Aufbau zur Verfügung."

¹² One example is Powell Spring, "Ein Amerikaner spricht" *Die Christengemeinschaft* April 1933, 32, by a prominent American anthroposophist living in Germany. The article begins: "Erwartungsvoll blicken wir aufs deutsche Volk, das sich seiner Weltaufgabe wieder bewußt wird." Spring writes that the Germans are the "Kernpunkt der Menschheitsentwicklung" and that Germany must resist "den Ansturm west-östlicher Ideen." "Großes und schönes schaffendes Deutschland" must "den westlichen Materialismus besiegen" and "östlichen Bolschewismus überwinden"; this is the "Weltenmission der deutschen Volksseele." The text ends with a paean to the new Germany under Nazi leadership: "Ringendes, leidendes, tapfer kämpfendes Deutschland, [...] auf Dich, Neues Deutschland. Geistiges

Even when these statements did not indicate straightforward endorsement of Nazism, they contributed to the broader societal support for the new regime's assertion of German honor. In the words of historian Peter Fritzsche, "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."¹³ Anthroposophists held that other nations had played their roles in world development and that now was the time for the Germans to play the leading role. The German people represented the highest of human aspirations, they were the people of the 'I' and the vanguard of the 'Universal Human.' These notions were crucial to anthroposophical teachings long before 1933. After Hitler came to power, anthroposophists emphasized that these teachings were especially relevant to the new situation in Germany. Divided as they were on organizational, tactical, and other lines, many of Steiner's followers shared the same underlying national assumptions.¹⁴

Deutschland erwache!" The piece is followed by a brief notice from the editor, Friedrich Rittelmeyer, proclaiming that the Christian Community is fully committed to "helping build the New Germany."

¹³ Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, 38. Like Fritzsche, Detlev Peukert's work underscored the ambivalence this process entailed. Characterizing "den Alltag unterm Hakenkreuz," Peukert emphasized "wie ambivalent politisches Handeln war, wie sehr in die Kalkulation von Opposition und Kompromiß immer auch Elemente der ungewollten Anpassung oder auch der bewußten Systembejahung hineinspielten." Peukert, *Volksgenossen und Gemeinschaftsfremde* (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1982), 290; cf. the English translation in Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 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."

¹⁴ Anthroposophy in the 1930s was marked by considerable in-fighting and organizational disarray, in Germany and elsewhere. Some of these splits and factional struggles extended back to the early 1920s, culminating in a dramatic series of expulsions in 1935 which reverberated throughout the international movement. For an anthroposophical overview see Bodo von Plato, *Zur Entwicklung der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft: Ein historischer Überblick* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1986). The chief organizations in Germany included the Anthroposophical Society itself, the 'Free Anthroposophical Association,' and the 'Anthroposophical Working Groups in Germany.' The latter had branches in Bielefeld, Essen, Halle, Hamburg, Liegnitz, Magdeburg, Mannheim, Munich, Nuremberg, Stuttgart and Tübingen. Due to these schisms and factions, Nazi opponents of anthroposophy in the SD and Gestapo had difficulty distinguishing the various anthroposophical groups; see e.g. the June 1937 report in BA R58/6194/1: 342. In spite of consistent anthroposophist polemics against "internationalism," the international character of the movement was important both to anthroposophists themselves and to their adversaries in the Nazi security apparatus. Even anti-Nazi

The particular accent these assumptions took on varied widely. A cross-section of relatively well-known anthroposophists – Hans Erhard Lauer, Franz Löffler, Johannes Bertram-Pingel, Bernhard Brons, and Ernst von Hippel – illustrates the range of ideological overlap. Lauer (1899-1979), a leading Austrian anthroposophist, offered an esoteric critique of national chauvinism in his 1937 book on ‘national souls,’ even while reproducing and reinforcing the cultural nationalist premises of Steiner’s teachings and condemning internationalism and cosmopolitanism. According to Lauer, Germany must take on the role of “spiritual teacher” for the whole world, and he warned that the “Nordic peoples” would die out if they did not recognize this German role.¹⁵ Since the mid-nineteenth century, he explained, inferior western influences had overwhelmed and ruined German culture, and anthroposophy was needed in order to revive it. Lauer went on to laud the current German regime for its energetic efforts to strengthen the German character.¹⁶

If Lauer presented his arguments as a spiritual refutation of nationalist sentiment, Franz Löffler (1895-1956) was outspokenly patriotic in his dealings with Nazi officials and fellow anthroposophists alike. As head of an anthroposophical institute for curative education in the rural town of Gerswalde north of Berlin, Löffler served as the public face of anthroposophist initiatives in an atypical environment.¹⁷ In

critics of anthroposophy took note of this dimension; Ernst Bloch wrote in 1935 that only the international affiliation of the anthroposophical movement “prevents it from unanimously going over to Hitler.” (Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, 170)

¹⁵ Lauer, *Die Volksseelen Europas*, 149. Both the 1937 edition and the earlier 1934 edition were published in Vienna, not in Germany.

¹⁶ Lauer commends “die energischen Bemühungen, die heute innerhalb des Deutschtums mit dem Ziele unternommen werden, die Regelung alles dessen, was Angelegenheiten des Volkstums sind, bewußt in die Hand zu nehmen und die Mitwirkung an derselben jedem einzelnen Volksgenossen zur persönlichen Verpflichtung zu machen.” (ibid., 163) The very appreciative review of the first edition of Lauer’s book by Richard Karutz in *Anthroposophie* September 1934, 379-81, notes that both Karutz and Lauer endorse “die augenblickliche Führung des deutschen Volkes.” Lauer’s approval of Nazi measures for maintaining the physical health of the nation is discussed below.

¹⁷ An anthroposophist biography is available in Hermann Girke, *Franz Löffler: Ein Leben für Anthroposophie und heilende Erziehung im Zeitenschicksal* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 1995). The Gerswalde institute continued to operate throughout the Nazi era, with Löffler as its leader. The

a collegial letter to a local party official in June 1940, at the height of the Blitzkrieg on the Western front with the German army advancing on Paris, Löffler praised Hitler's fulfillment of the German mission in a remarkable combination of anthroposophical and National Socialist vocabularies.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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 German 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 and drew a direct parallel to the subsequent rise of National Socialism.²⁰

letters from Löffler examined here contrast sharply with the portrait of Löffler as a steadfast opponent of Nazi *Gleichschaltung* efforts in van der Locht, *Anthroposophische Heilanstalten im Dritten Reich*.

¹⁸ Franz Löffler to Kreisleiter Riedel, June 5, 1940, BA R58/6190: 101-112. 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."

¹⁹ Löffler to Riedel, June 5, 1940, BA R58/6190: 103. Of the Gerswalde institute's sixteen year history he wrote: "Niemals war ein Jude bei der Begründung, Leitung und Mitarbeit kapitalmässig, pädagogisch oder sonstwie beteiligt." (104) He applauded a number of local Nazis who helped the institute and recounted its involvement in the local Hitler Youth. The letter is in part a response to the mistrust and misunderstanding that the institute had encountered from some officials. Löffler's tone is amicable and assertive rather than defensive.

²⁰ Franz Löffler to Kreisleiter Riedel, June 8, 1940, BA R58/6190: 119-122. The four page letter recounts Löffler's "politische Vergangenheit" in detail, with particular emphasis on his engagement in *völkisch* politics among his fellow Banater Schwaben, the ethnic German communities in the Banat, where he grew up. After fighting as a volunteer in WWI, Löffler returned to the Banat and became active in "alldrutschen Kreisen" there, taking part in the "völkische Wiedergeburt der Banater Schwaben." He reports: "Aus unserer Gruppe wuchs später die völkische Erneuerungsbewegung, die

Löffler's private correspondence with other anthroposophists displayed a similar dedication to protecting the German people from "foreign ethnic infiltration."²¹

Such sentiments appeared in more refined and artistic terms in the work of anthroposophist author and orator Johannes Pingel, who published and performed under the name Johannes Bertram.²² His public presentations during the latter half of the 1930s featured familiar anthroposophical themes framed in a national idiom. In March 1936, for example, 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."²³ Further lectures included

den Nationalsozialismus in den dort möglichen Formen vertritt." (121) In 1921 he was expelled from Hungary for "pangermanistischen Umtrieben" and began working with the *Alldeutschen Verband* in Germany. The letter concedes that Löffler did not come to appreciate Hitler's achievements until 1935: "Dass Adolf Hitler das grosse Wunder vollbracht hatte, merkte ich erst 1935." (122)

²¹ Franz Löffler to Erhard Bartsch, January 22, 1941, BA NS15/304: 57069-57073. Here Löffler described his homeland among the Banater Schwaben, boasting of the intact agricultural communities they built and sustained for centuries as an outpost of Germanism, and proudly recounted their success as a healthy peasantry who maintained a "gesunden Boden" (57070). But in the last two decades, since WWI, all this had been threatened and was now in decline. Löffler wrote that the ethnic Germans' earlier communal efforts had successfully eliminated "den dominierenden jüdischen Einfluß." (57070) But they were now being ruined by "fremdvölkische Unterwanderung," mechanized agriculture, and "Amerikanismus," which were all erasing this "deutsche Pionierarbeit" (57072). He noted that their previous success as German settlers in non-German territories could be useful, in conjunction with biodynamic agriculture, "für den zu besiedelnden Osten" (57071).

²² Born as Johannes Pingel in 1891, he adopted the nom de plume 'Johannes Bertram' as an adult and signed documents as Johannes Bertram-Pingel. His letterhead from the 1930s describes him as a "Schriftsteller und Vortragsmeister." He joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1922 and was an active participant in Hamburg anthroposophist circles. Though he left the Anthroposophical Society in 1934, and claimed in his 1939 NSDAP application that he had done so due to his commitment to National Socialism, his post-1945 publications are fully anthroposophical; see e.g. Johannes Bertram, *Die Urweisheit der alten Ägypter: 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 mysteriendramatische Dichtung* (Stuttgart: Hilfswerk Elisabeth, 1977). Bertram also published in the *Rudolf Steiner Blätter* in 1928. On his 1934 resignation from the Anthroposophical Society see Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 28-30, which mistakes Johannes Bertram and Johannes Pingel for two different individuals.

²³ See the leaflets in Bertram's *Reichsschrifttumskammer* file, BA RK/I33: 2311-2338, advertising lecture series on "Goethes Faust, das Testament der Deutschen," "Schiller und die geistige Revolution

“Germany’s European cultural mission,” “Fundamentals of Nordic divine insight,” “Rosenberg’s myth of the blood,” and “A battle between two racial souls.”²⁴ These presentations garnered extremely enthusiastic reviews from the *Völkischer Beobachter* and other Nazi newspapers.²⁵ The reports noted favorably that Bertram championed “a race principle based on the spirit and the soul.”²⁶ He cultivated contacts with the Nazi hierarchy and particularly admired the work of Alfred Rosenberg.²⁷ 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.²⁸

der Gegenwart,” “Blut und Boden, Nationalität und Persönlichkeit,” and “Germanische Weltanschauung in Wagners Ringdichtung.”

²⁴ Promotional pamphlets in BA RK/B155: 1885-1948 for lectures on “Deutschlands europäische Kultursendung,” “Rosenbergs Mythos vom Blut,” “Grundtatsachen nordischer Gotterkenntnis,” “Ein Kampf zweier Rassen-seelen.” In a February 10, 1943 submission to the *Reichsschrifttumskammer*, Bertram reported 1942 income of 1800 Reichsmark from books and 2900 Reichsmark from lectures (BA RK/I33: 2332).

²⁵ See the excerpts from a 1938 review in the *Völkischer Beobachter* of Bertram’s presentations on “Germanische Weltanschauung in Wagners Ringdichtung” (BA RK/B155: 1909).

²⁶ A laudatory 1936 account from the *Hamburger Anzeiger* reported that Bertram advocated “ein geistig-seelisches Rasseprinzip” and that he quoted Rosenberg in support of his stance (BA RK/I33: 2319).

²⁷ Johannes Bertram, *Goethes Faust im Blickfeld des XX. Jahrhunderts: Eine weltanschauliche Deutung* (Hamburg: Dreizack, 1942) draws repeatedly on Rosenberg’s *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*. In his November 1939 application for party membership Bertram wrote: “Ueber meine deutsch-völkische Gesinnung dürfte wohl in Hinsicht auf meine öffentlich anerkannte Wirksamkeit als Schriftsteller, Vortragsmeister u. Redner, als Dozent der Volkshochschule kein Zweifel bestehen.” (BA PK/A315: 686) As noted in the previous chapter, Bertram-Pingel’s application was denied in May 1940 because of his earlier membership in the Anthroposophical Society.

²⁸ Johannes Bertram to Generalsekretär Sievers, Deutsches Ahnenerbe, January 23, 1937, and attached materials, BA RK/I33: 2322; Bertram to Joseph Otto Plaßmann, Deutsches Ahnenerbe, April 28, 1939, asking Plaßmann to bring Bertram’s work to Himmler’s attention and officially adopt it into the SS’s cultural program (BA RK/I33: 2330). Plaßmann’s June 1, 1939 reply is friendly but vague, leaving open the possibility of future cooperation but making no concrete plans (BA RK/I33: 2334). In a detailed three page report to *Ahnenerbe* head Wolfram Sievers dated March 29, 1939, *Ahnenerbe* staff member SS-Untersturmführer Dr. Appel described Bertram’s Berlin performance of his play *Karl und Widukind*, which Appel attended on Sievers’ orders. Appel’s very positive assessment testifies that Bertram presented a compelling vision of “ein großes, freies Germanenreich, das alle deutschen Stämme umfassen sollte,” the realization of “eines nordischen Germaniens” in “Verbindung mit dem Reich,” brought together in the “Form eines deutschen Reiches germanischer Nation unter einem wahrhaften deutschen Führer” (BA RK/I33: 2324-28).

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 in detail his artistic commitment to Steiner's spiritual science as well as his hopes and expectations for Nazism's renewal of German culture, explaining that Steiner's work had enabled him to "overcome intellectualism" and freed his creative abilities.²⁹ Lamenting the animosity that Steiner and his movement had encountered during the Weimar era, Brons observed that both anthroposophy and National Socialism had opposed the Weimar press, which was "Marxist infected and hostile to the spirit" and had conducted "a campaign of lies against anthroposophy." He thus hoped, like other anthroposophists, that the advent of Nazism would put an end to these lies and calumnies. Brons expressed his bitter disappointment that the same defamation of Steiner's teachings had intensified under the Third Reich.³⁰ Just as disappointing was Nazism's failure to

²⁹ Bernhard Brons, "Die wesentlichen Daten aus meinem Leben" (BA RK B20: 2726- 2738), submitted to the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* in March 1937. Brons wrote: "Mein Suchen nach den wahrhaft schöpferischen Quellen der Kunst fand seinen Führer in der Person Rudolf Steiners. In seiner anthroposophisch orientierten Geisteswissenschaft war ein methodisches Instrument gegeben, das möglich machte, Leben und Kunstschaffen wieder aus ihren Ursprungs Kräften mit geistigem Inhalt zu durchdringen." (2728) "Seit Beginn der 80er Jahre des vorigen Jahrhunderts kämpfte Rudolf Steiner für eine geistige Erneuerung des Deutschtums. Die grossen Geister deutscher Vergangenheit könnten als die Träger seines Werkes erscheinen, wenn dieses einer äusseren Stütze bedürfte. [...] Der deutsche Idealismus, vor allem der Goetheanismus fand in ihm seine Vollendung, die Naturwissenschaft ihre geistige Fortsetzung und Befreiung vom Materialismus. Nie vorher, nie nachher ward der Geist der deutschen Volkheit im geschwisterlichen Verband der europäischen Volksseelen in stärkerem Glanze erschienen als durch das Wort Rudolf Steiners; nie hat jemand den Gliedern dieser Volkheit grössere Aufgaben gestellt und damit grössere Ehre erwiesen als er." (2732) 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). Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 314 reports that Brons was arrested by the Gestapo in June 1941 and held for three months.

³⁰ "Es bestanden aber zuversichtliche Hoffnungen so mancher Wahrheitssucher, dass mit dem Heraufkommen der Nationalsozialistischen Bewegung die phantastischen Verleumdungsaktionen der vom Nationalsozialismus so heftig bekämpften Presse gegen Dr. Steiners Werk nun verschwinden

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. This made it much more difficult for Steiner’s followers to fulfill their hope of serving both the state and the spirit.³¹

Confident optimism, rather than disappointment, was the predominant tone of Ernst von Hippel’s work in the Nazi era. 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 in 1935.³² He celebrated Germany’s spiritual mission and presented it as fully compatible with National Socialism, quoting Hitler to illustrate his point.

würden. Es war die bitterste Enttäuschung vieler, als man sehen musste, dass die Lügenkampagne gegen die Anthroposophie, das dunkelste Erbe des marxistisch infizierten, geistfeindlichen Journalismus im neuen Staat mit stärkerer Kraft sich auswirken konnte als je vorher.” Brons, “Die wesentlichen Daten aus meinem Leben,” BA RK B20: 2732.

³¹ “Es kam der politische Umbruch vom Jahre 1933. Und vieles, was das deutsche Volk auf dem Wege geistiger Evolution nicht unternehmen wollte, setzte sich nun von der politischen Seite her mit der nationalsozialistischen Revolution durch, nachdem die furchtbaren Folgen des Weltkriegs und der geistlose Dilletantismus der europäischen Nachkriegspolitik das deutsche Volk an den Rand des Abgrunds gebracht hatten. Persönlichkeiten, welche damals gleichermassen der nationalsozialistischen wie der anthroposophischen Bewegung dienen wollten (durch die erste dem Staat, durch die zweite dem Geist), waren erfüllt von der Hoffnung, dass nun nach der Bewältigung so vieler sozialer, politischer und wirtschaftlicher Probleme auch die Stunde kommen würde, in der die Fragen des Geisteslebens in positivem Sinne gelöst werden würden; dass der Materialismus, welcher die geistige Basis aller Kulturzersetzung des Abendlandes ist und der Vater des Bolschewismus, dass dieser Materialismus auch im öffentlichen Leben wenigstens so weit überwunden würde, dass die Vertreter einer exakten spirituellen Welterkenntnis, wie Rudolf Steiner sie begründet hatte, nicht jeder beliebigen Hetze und Verleumdung schutzlos preisgegeben sind. Diese Hoffnungen wurden nicht erfüllt.” Brons, “Die wesentlichen Daten aus meinem Leben,” BA RK B20: 2734. Despite these disappointments, Brons continued his efforts to get Nazi authorities to see the positive side of anthroposophy, meeting with the Gestapo, the president of the *Reichsschrifttumskammer*, and other officials.

³² Hippel, *Mensch und Gemeinschaft*, 129, acclaiming the new “Betonung des Willens, des Volksgeistes, des Mythos, der Rasse” as well as the new emphasis on “Disziplin und Gehorsam” and “heroischer Haltung.” The passage comes at the beginning of the book’s long final chapter, titled “Aufgaben des beginnenden Zeitalters” (128-70). The book opens by denouncing “Materialismus und Intellektualismus” (v), and declares that individuals are always “verbunden mit Kräften des Blutes und der Vererbung” (4) and “verbunden mit Rasse und Volkstum” (5). Hippel presents Steiner’s “übersinnliche Weltdeutung” is the pinnacle of German achievement in vanquishing materialism (134). He offers an anthroposophical justification for “Führertum” (154) and urges a struggle against “materialistischen Liberalismus” as the basis for “die Gestaltung einer deutschen Gemeinschaft.” (138)

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 and redeem humankind.³³ In his 1933 book on “the university in the new state,” Hippel extolled the “national revolution” for putting an end to the old materialist scholarship and inaugurating a new and 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.³⁴ In a 1937 book warning against the dangers of Bolshevism, he blamed Marxism and materialism on “the subversive powers of the Jewish intellect.”³⁵ For Hippel, National Socialism stood for “the renewal of a spiritual Germany” in an authoritarian state and converged with Steiner’s teachings.³⁶

The range of attitudes toward Nazism expressed by these five anthroposophists reflected the differing experiences of occultists under the Nazi regime. Some practitioners of Steiner’s ‘spiritual science’ primarily registered the gradual attrition of

³³ Hippel, *Mensch und Gemeinschaft*, 162, presents a spiritual version of “der nationalen Mission Deutschlands” and posits “wahrhaftes Führertum” as “die eigentliche Mission Deutschlands.” After quoting Hitler he writes: “Denn Erfüllung der wahren Aufgaben Deutschlands und Verwirklichung seines höheren Wesens ist die innere Hoffnung der sich recht verstehenden Welt.” (163) Hippel quotes Hitler again on 181. Anthroposophists today claim that Hippel “rejected National Socialism”; see Hans-Jürgen Bracker, “Ernst von Hippel” in von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 312-13.

³⁴ Hippel, *Die Universität im neuen Staat*, 19. Hippel then offers a page of antisemitic clichés about Jews as an “überaltete Rasse” and a desert people who embody rationalism, intellectualism, abstraction, positivism, strict legalism with no spiritual content, and cultural corrosiveness; he again endorses the measures of the “nationale Revolution” against the Jews (20). Hippel’s “Vorbemerkung,” dated October 1933, begins: “Die folgenden Seiten suchen als Beitrag zur Hochschulfrage dem Aufbau des neuen Staates zu dienen.”

³⁵ Hippel, *Der Bolschewismus und seine Überwindung*, 27. The book begins: “Die vorliegende Arbeit stellt sich die Aufgabe, den Kampf, welchen Deutschland heute dem Bolschewismus angesagt hat, wissenschaftlich zu unterstützen. Denn daß dieser Kampf nicht nur ein berechtigter ist, sondern daß er, weit mehr als nur dies, notwendig ist für die Erde überhaupt, da es in ihm zuletzt um die Rettung des Menschen geht, ist ihre tiefste Überzeugung.” (5) For another anthroposophist promotion of the German mission in the East during the Nazi era see Valentin Tomberg, “Die geistigen Gründe der osteuropäischen Tragödie” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* November 1935, 5-8.

³⁶ Hippel, *Die Universität im neuen Staat*, 5, 19. Explaining Steiner’s doctrines, Hippel argued that ‘social threefolding’ means “den organisch notwendigen Aufbau des Staates” and thus corresponds to “das Wesen des deutschen Geistes,” which demands “eines geistigen Führertums” (23). He portrayed Nazism as an ally in this process; the “nationale Revolution” is seeking the “geistige Selbstverwaltung” of the university “im Interesse der Nation” (24), and ‘social threefolding’ and National Socialism come together in “dem Gedanken ständischen Aufbaus und eines autoritären Staates” (27).

anthroposophical 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 considerable grounds for agreement between anthroposophists and Nazis. Many of Steiner’s followers posited a fundamental contrast between ‘intellect’ and ‘spirit’; along with materialism, intellectualism was one of the worst features of the un-spiritual contemporary world, responsible for the degeneration and debasement of properly spiritual thinking.³⁷ 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.”³⁸

In addition to such points of convergence between the two world views, anthroposophists and their supporters were often more than willing to endorse repressive measures against other occult groups. In a January 1936 memorandum to

³⁷ In Steiner’s words, “Intellectuality flows forth from Ahriman as a cold and soulless cosmic impulse.” Steiner, *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts*, 98. Anthroposophists associated the purportedly negative aspects of intellectual thought not only with Jews but with the French as well. For an extended example see Karl Heyer, “Das französische Wesen und die gegenwärtige Weltlage” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* July 1933, 3-9, which attributes to French culture the kind of thinking that anthroposophy needs to overcome: “Das nur logische, formale Denken muss verlebendigt, spiritualisiert, es muss beweglich werden. In dem Masse, wie die bloss logische Form des Denkens gesprengt wird, öffnet es sich gleichsam nach oben und empfängt den Einschlag aus der geistigen Welt. Das Denken verwandelt sich. Die grosse Erziehung hierzu ist Anthroposophie, wurzelnd in mitteleuropäisch-deutscher Geistesart.” (8) The article characterizes the French as a people whose time has definitively passed, a people in inevitable decline, a people dedicated to nationalism, revenge, and the military destruction of Germany. According to Heyer, France is a “grave danger to the world.” (8) For an equally sharp contrast between the German essence and the French essence see Sigismund von Gleich, “Zur Erkenntnis der Völkerseelen” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* April 1935, 19-22.

³⁸ Hauptmann Franz Zeno Diemer to Hermann Reischle, July 5, 1941, BAK N1094/II/1. Diemer was a Luftwaffe officer and *Kreiswirtschaftsberater der NSDAP* in Vienna and a proponent of biodynamic agriculture. Decrying the recent measures against anthroposophists, which he attributed to the interference of disguised freemasons who had led the authorities astray, Diemer wrote that in biodynamics he “ein Bemühen sah, das sich durchaus mit den nationalsozialistischen Bestrebungen deckte” and “eine wertvolle Waffe in dem nationalsozialistischen Kampf gegen den volksfremden Intellektualismus [...]” For background on the concept of ‘intellectualism’ in the Nazi era see Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*, 315-22, and for general context see Leander Kaiser, “Geist versus Intelligenz” in Leander Kaiser and Michael Ley, eds., *Von der Romantik zur ästhetischen Religion* (Munich: Fink, 2004), 99-108.

Hermann Göring, Jürgen von Grone condemned liberalism, Bolshevism, England, France, America, Wall Street, Marxism, the Jesuits, the League of Nations, Freemasonry, theosophy, and “Eastern occultism” as enemies of the German spirit. He emphasized that the regime’s suppression of “occult societies” that are “of foreign ethnic origin” was entirely justified, but that restrictions on anthroposophists made no sense, as anthroposophy was profoundly German and was actively combating the very same enemies as National Socialism.³⁹ Grone also claimed that the Nazi state’s foes, France, Britain, and Russia, were ruled by “occult brotherhoods” striving to destroy Germany.⁴⁰ These claims were repeated in equally elaborate form by Erhard Bartsch in July 1940.⁴¹

³⁹ Jürgen von Grone, “Denkschrift” for Göring, January 1936, BA R58/6195: 382-392. His endorsement of a Nazi ban on “okkulten Gesellschaften” that are of “völkisch fremder Herkunft” appears on 386. See also Jürgen von Grone to Ministerialrat Marotzke, June 19, 1941, GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 34: 9-14, protesting the actions against anthroposophists as part of the “campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences”; Grone writes: “Die Aktion wird mit grösster Wahrscheinlichkeit schon in den nächsten Wochen Formen annehmen, die ganz sicher nicht im Interesse des deutschen Volkes liegen, das in einem zweiten Existenzkampf grössten Ausmasses im Inneren in Ruhe gelassen werden will und Eingriffe in die inneren Bezirke des geistigen Lebens auf die Dauer schwer erträgt. Man kann Sekten zerschlagen, die keinen oder einen fragwürdigen Inhalt haben, die eine einseitige, ungesunde Gefühlsmystik treiben und sich ausserhalb des Volks- und Staatsgefüges stellen. Ein mit der deutschen Kultur tief verbundenes Geistesstreben lässt sich nicht durch Polizeigewalt aufheben und ihr wahrer Charakter ist nicht durch ein Zerbild ihres Wesens zu diskreditieren. [...] Die aus deutschem Geistesleben entwickelte Geisteswissenschaft Rudolf Steiners hat auf geistigem Felde nur *einen* wirklich ernst zu nehmenden Gegner, den Jesuitismus. Es kann nicht im deutschen Interesse gelegen sein, diesem in die Hände zu arbeiten.”

⁴⁰ Jürgen von Grone, “Vom Wirken Rudolf Steiners für das Deutschtum,” February 1936, BA NS15/303: 58270-74. Grone portrays Steiner as an active opponent of theosophy, Freemasonry, materialistic Western science, Marxism, Bolshevism, clericalism, Jesuitism, democracy, pacifism, and internationalism.

⁴¹ Erhard Bartsch, “Rudolf Steiner und die Aufgaben des deutschen Volkes” July 7, 1940 (BA NS15/302: 57676-57697). Of Steiner Bartsch wrote: “Sein Lebenswerk ist ein einsamer, mutvoller Kampf gegen die gefährlichsten Feinde des deutschen Geistes, der deutschen Seele, des deutschen Volkes.” (57679) In particular, he portrayed Steiner as a lifelong fighter against un-German influences from France and England and a champion of Germandom everywhere. The longest section in the document is “Rudolf Steiners Kampf gegen die Ziele der Welt-Freimaurerei” (57681-57695), followed by the final section, “Rudolf Steiner während des Weltkrieges” (57696-57697). Bartsch claimed that Steiner always fought for Germany against the “westlichen okkultistischen Freimaurerlogen” (57695). He presented anthroposophist Karl Heise’s antisemitic and anti-masonic arguments as the extension of and fulfillment of Steiner’s own warnings against Western masonic machinations, and characterized WWI as a conspiracy against Germany in pursuit of the “Ziele dieser okkulten Bruderschaften” (57693). In Bartsch’s view, Steiner’s teachings offered the only bulwark against “den okkulten Mächten des Westens” (57691). See also Friedrich Rittelmeyer’s November 1934 letter to Bartsch (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 311-316) about the dangers of freemasonry. Recounting personal conversations

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 stems from an SD unit under the authority of Otto Ohlendorf. Writing in May 1941, in the midst of the SD's preparation for the upcoming "campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences," Ohlendorf and his colleagues proposed the immediate elimination of astrology, spiritualism, clairvoyance, Christian Science, and other ostensibly un-German 'sects' which represented unhealthy and Oriental forms of occultism. Anthroposophy, in contrast, called for more restrained and 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.⁴² The proposal, which

with Steiner, Rittelmeyer wrote that Steiner warned in August 1915 and again in January 1917 of the grave threat of Western masonry and its efforts against Germany. Rittelmeyer also recommended Heise's antisemitic and anti-masonic work.

⁴² BA R58/6197/1: 19-27: Reichssicherheitshauptamt III, "Bericht. Betr.: Aktion gegen Geheimlehren und sogenannte Geheimwissenschaften." The document provides a history of the rise of occultism as a response to an increasing rationalization of life in the wake of the "westeuropäische Aufklärung" and the consequent ascent of liberalism, mechanization, technology, urbanization, and "Zivilisation," which has left modern people "wurzellos" and sundered the "Bindungen zwischen Mensch und Natur" (19). As a reaction to this "einseitige Rationalisierung," myriad "Pseudo-Religionen und Pseudo-Weltanschauungen" sprouted up, promising to restore knowledge of the secret forces of nature and the cosmos. But most of these counter-movements were beholden to American origins and thus of no use for Germany, particularly "Astrologie, Spiritismus, Okkultismus, Wahrsagen, Hypnose, Christian Science, Gesundbeterei, Sektenwesen" and related tendencies. "Alle diese Geheimlehren knüpfen nicht an die geistigen Traditionen des nordischen Menschen an, sondern übernehmen die aus dem Orient und Mittelmeerraum überlieferten magischen und mystischen Vorstellungen." These foreign-influenced occultist tendencies tried "einerseits nationalsozialistische Gedankengänge in ihre Pseudo-Lehren hineinzuziehen und andererseits an führende Kreise des Nationalsozialismus heranzukommen und sie mit ihrem Gedankengut zu infizieren." (20) The result was "eine tragische und zugleich merkwürdige Verknüpfung von echten deutschen Anschauungen von der Ganzheit und dem Lebenszusammenhang der Natur mit diesen orientalischen, wesensfremden magischen und mystischen Geheimlehren." (21) But fortunately an antidote is at hand; "das deutsche Geistesleben" has the capacity to resist such un-German forms of occultism while maintaining vigilance against mechanization, rationalism, and other invasive western impulses. Anthroposophy, the SD analysts write, can play a positive role in that process if it is disentangled from its Oriental and mystical filiations. The document thus calls, before commencing the campaign against occultism, for a process of clarification regarding anthroposophy, which combines "würdige Anschauungen mit wesensfremden Aberglauben" and requires an "Entwischung zwischen deutschen Naturanschauungen und östlichen Lehren" (22). Pending such a process, anthroposophists are to be spared the punishment which the document recommends for other occultists, including imprisonment in concentration camps and prohibition of all publications. The document ends by proposing the establishment of a "Zentralinstitut für Geheimlehren und sog.

Heydrich rejected, indicates anthroposophy's stature in the eyes of its Nazi admirers. For many others in the SD, however, anthroposophy itself was a key example of 'Oriental' influence on German spiritual life, a perception that is somewhat incongruous in light of Steiner's oft-repeated deprecation of Asian spiritual traditions in European contexts.⁴³ In the eyes of anthroposophists and their Nazi supporters, Steiner's spiritual science and its thoroughly German foundations decisively distinguished anthroposophy from its occult competitors and rendered it a fitting partner of National Socialist objectives.

In part on the basis of these affinities, a number of anthroposophist influences can be traced in official Nazi cultural life. The expressionist author Kurt Heynicke, who was significantly inspired by anthroposophy, played an important role in the *Thing-Bewegung* during the early years of the Third Reich.⁴⁴ Composer and music critic Walter Abendroth, who had an extensive anthroposophist background and was a major figure in musical circles in the Nazi era, vocally supported Hitler's regime and endorsed the removal of 'foreign' elements from German cultural life.⁴⁵ Abendroth's

Geheimwissenschaften" in order to pursue the necessary separation of wheat from chaff (27). For further context on Ohlendorf's stance toward Steiner's movement and his position within internal SD debates on anthroposophy see the contrasting memoranda from December 1937 in BA R58/6187: 85-88.

⁴³ Compare Steiner, *Die Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen*, 76-93; Steiner, *Grundelemente der Esoterik*, 108-115; Steiner, *Westliche und östliche Weltgegensätzlichkeit*, 226-39; Steiner, *Anthroposophie als Kosmosophie*, 14-29; Steiner, *Gegensätze in der Menschheitsentwicklung*, 26-39, 153-55; Steiner, *Christus und die menschliche Seele*, 98-99; Steiner, *Luzifer-Gnosis*, 370-71; Steiner, *Gedankenfreiheit und soziale Kräfte* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1971), 126-42; Steiner, *The Archangel Michael: His Mission and Ours* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1996), 175-92.

⁴⁴ Cf. Johannes Reichl, *Das Thingspiel: Über den Versuch eines nationalsozialistischen Lehrstück-Theaters* (Frankfurt: Mißbeck, 1988), 61-84, and Bill Niven, "Apocalyptic Elements in National Socialist 'Thingspiele' and in Drama of the Weimar Republic" *German Life and Letters* 48 (1995), 170-83. For his published work see Kurt Heynicke, *Der Weg zum Ich: Die Eroberung der inneren Welt* (Prien: Anthropos-Verlag, 1922), and Heynicke, *Der Weg ins Reich* (Berlin: Volksschaft-Verlag, 1935).

⁴⁵ Walter Abendroth, "Vom Lebens- und Entwicklungsrecht des jungen Musikschaffens" *Monatsschrift für das deutsche Geistesleben* May 1939, 263-70, approves of the "Ausscheidung des nachweislich Fremdblütigen" from the German music scene (268); Abendroth, "Stunde der Bewährung" *Monatsschrift für das deutsche Geistesleben* October 1939, 567-70, explicitly endorses Nazism and describes the new war as "Deutschlands Verteidigungskampf gegen Polen" (568) while celebrating Hitler, Göring, the "festen Willen" of Germany and "alle Menschen deutschen Blutes" (569). Abendroth's 1947 denazification file emphasizes the "stark antisemitische Tendenz" of his Nazi-era

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 and sought a position as director of the Schiller-Theater in Berlin. 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.⁴⁶ Haaß-Berkow did not receive the Berlin position but was appointed head of the Württemberg state theater, a position he held throughout the Nazi era. Aside from relatively high-profile cases such as these, a variety of lesser-known anthroposophists found positions in the Nazi party or its affiliated organizations.⁴⁷

In the eyes of some of Steiner's followers, National Socialism had many virtues and one cardinal flaw, namely its failure to recognize the significance of anthroposophy. This perspective emerges again and again in sources from the Nazi

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 Michael Meyer, "The Nazi Musicologist as Myth Maker in the Third Reich" *Journal of Contemporary History* 10 (1975): 649-65.

⁴⁶ Gottfried Haaß-Berkow to Kultusminister Rust, July 18, 1933, BA RK/H56: 432-434, asking to be appointed director of the Schiller-Theater in Berlin; he also requests that his letter be given to Hitler. Haaß-Berkow to Staatskommissar Hinkel, Berlin, April 22, 1933, BA RK/H56: 490-496, asking for an official position in the new cultural apparatus and for financial support for his theater troupe; he notes that he sent same letter to Goebbels. The tone of these letters is not one of *Anbiederung* but of a self-assured figure anticipating recognition and status within the new order, emboldened and enthused by the Nazi takeover of cultural affairs. The file also contains several very enthusiastic statements by various Nazi figures strongly supporting Haaß-Berkow and backing his request for the Berlin position, as well as glowing reviews of him and his troupe from the Nazi press. Haaß-Berkow (1888-1957) was a life-long anthroposophist from 1913 onward. For further background cf. Klaus Vondung, *Magie und Manipulation: Ideologischer Kult und politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 18-19.

⁴⁷ In addition to the examples in the preceding chapter, see BA R58/5709c: 1063, an October 1935 protocol signed by Karl Fritz stating that he is a member of the Anthroposophical Society, the Christian Community, and the Nazi Party; and BA R58/5660: 16, on Josef Keinz, an anthroposophist and SA member in Zweibrücken. Nazi reports on anthroposophists who were not party members sometimes noted their positive stance toward the regime. An SD evaluation of Viktor Wehrle, former head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Salzburg, observed: "Sein Verhalten dem nationalsozialistischen Staat gegenüber kann als positiv bezeichnet werden." (SD-Abschnitt Salzburg to RSHA, May 30, 1941, BA R58/5660: 175) A February 1941 evaluation of longtime Munich anthroposophist Otto Crusius by the National Socialist Teachers League reported: "Seine gesamte Haltung zeigt, daß er auf dem Boden des heutigen Staates steht." (BA PK/B209: 1324)

era, both anthroposophist sources and Nazi sources. 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 told him they regretted that there was not more cooperation between anthroposophy and Nazism.⁴⁸ Others held that the more one was an anthroposophist, the more one understood that the German people needed National Socialism.⁴⁹ A biodynamic dairy farmer from Silesia emphasized in 1937 that both biodynamics and Nazism were based on *Naturverbundenheit* or closeness to nature.⁵⁰ A Munich anthroposophist who was also a party member and an SA officer went further, explaining that anthroposophy did not merely speak of a

⁴⁸ August 6, 1938 report by SS-Oberscharführer Rostock, BA R58/6187: 30-34, reporting on his undercover visit to the Goetheanum the day before. He described the audience as made up largely of “intellectuals,” three quarters of them women. Noting that most of the anthroposophists present were German citizens, he emphasized that they went out of their way not to violate any German laws even though they were in Switzerland. “Es scheint tatsächlich bei den deutschen Anthroposophen eine Anweisung zu bestehen, wonach nichts unternommen werden darf, was sie irgendwie mit dem Staat in Konflikt bringen könnte und die Anhänger von Rudolf Steiner scheinen sich streng an diese Anordnung zu halten.” (32) He relayed a long conversation about National Socialism with an anthroposophist from Stuttgart named Blume, reporting Blume’s attitude thus: “Den Nationalsozialismus erkenne er vollständig an, er bedauere nur – und zwar im Interesse des Nationalsozialismus – daß man aus ‘Unkenntnis’ die anthroposophischen Vereinigungen verboten habe und die anthroposophische Lehre ablehne.” Blume stressed anthroposophy’s contributions to Germany and noted that some Nazi officials appreciated biodynamic agriculture, anthroposophical medicine, and so forth. “Er betonte weiter, daß er es bedauere, daß keine Zusammenarbeit zustandekäme” between Nazism and anthroposophy; “die Anthroposophen hätten früher gegen den Kommunismus, gegen das Weltjudentum, gegen die Freimaurerei (!), gegen die Kirchen gekämpft. Heute hätte der Nationalsozialismus ihnen diese Arbeit abgenommen. Alle ihre ehemaligen Gegner seien im Reich durch den Nat.Soz. besiegt worden.” (33) Blume also believed that “der Nationalsoz. eines Tages besiegt werde durch die Anthroposophie. Er bedauere dies und seiner Meinung nach hätte der Nat.Soz. nur einen Fehler, seine Gegnerschaft zur Lehre von Rudolf Steiner.” (34) It is noteworthy that these statements come from an anthroposophist speaking freely outside of Germany’s borders, in an anthroposophical context, unaware of the undercover agent’s identity.

⁴⁹ Heinrich Langsteiner, Vienna, to Adolf Hitler, December 21, 1938, BA R58/6187: 25-27; the letter begins “Mein Führer!” Langsteiner writes: “Je mehr einer Anthroposoph ist, desto mehr ist er deutscher Mensch und sieht im Nationalsozialismus die heute notwendige Form des Zusammenlebens des deutschen Volkes.” (27)

⁵⁰ Ernst Schaaf to Bürgermeister der Stadt Reichenbach, July 6, 1937, BA R9349/1. Similar sentiments could be found in Nazi assessments of biodynamics. Alfred Baeumler, for example, wrote: “Die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise ist aus Anregungen hervorgegangen, die durch Rudolf Steiner im Jahre 1924 gegeben wurden. Dabei hat Steiner aus eigenen bäuerlichen Erinnerungen bewußt an die Überlieferung des deutschen Bauerntums angeknüpft. Sein Werk ist in dieser Hinsicht ein Versuch der Wiedergewinnung alter bäuerlicher Praxis auf dem Wege bewußter Forschung. Aus einem dynamischen, d.h. nicht auf Stoffe und Quantitäten, sondern auf Qualitäten und Kräfte bezogenen Erkennen der Welt heraus hat Steiner die alte bäuerliche Praxis gerechtfertigt und vervollständigt.” Baeumler, “Über die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise” BA NS 15/305: 57723.

racial soul but revealed the spiritual origins of the racial soul and indicated the path to fulfillment of the German mission.⁵¹ Waldorf school leaders underlined their commonalities with Nazi doctrine, condemning “decrepit liberal individualism” and acclaiming “authority” as their pedagogical ideal and practice, while noting that the “covert and overt enemies of the German essence” were anthroposophy’s enemies as well, particularly “Jewish intellectuals” and “rootless internationalists.”⁵²

Stances such as these suggest the spectrum of possible points of contact between esoteric and Nazi thought, as well as the different uses to which these points of contact could be put in concrete contexts of opportunity or necessity.⁵³ Whether by invoking common foes or common goals, anthroposophists and Nazis were able to reach a degree of agreement when their overlapping theoretical and practical agendas appeared to be in accord. For much of the Third Reich, this allowed anthroposophists

⁵¹ June 8, 1934 letter from a Munich anthroposophist, signature illegible, to the Zentralbüro des politischen Polizeikommandeurs, BA R58/6188/1: 262-266. The author is a technischer Reichsbahninspektor, an NSDAP member since June 1931, and Politischer Leiter of an SA Sturm. The letter, written to protest the ban on anthroposophist meetings in Munich, describes anthroposophy thus: “Es wird hier nicht nur gesprochen von der Rassenseele, sondern Dr. Steiner deckte den geistigen Hintergrund derselben auf, indem er hinwies auf die hohe geistige Wesenheit, den Genius des Volkes, der dessen Schicksal lenkt, seine grossen Männer inspiriert und ihnen hilft, ihre Erdenaufgabe zu erfüllen. Es wird freudig begrüsst das Wiedererwachen der deutschen Seele im Anbruch des dritten Reiches, der deutschen Seele, deren Weltmission im Rahmen der Menschheitsentwicklung Dr. Steiner im Sinne Fichtes bejahte.” (263) “Dr. Steiner verlebendigte die Lehre von der Wiederverkörperung, welche auch Herr Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg in seinem “Mythos” eine adelige Weltanschauung nennt.” (265)

⁵² See the nine-page unsigned document headlined “Die Leitung der Freien Waldorfschule. Stuttgart, den 20. Februar 34” (BA R58/6220b: 70-78), characterizing the adversaries of anthroposophy as “die Kreise der Bolschewisten und Kommunisten, der Jesuiten und Freimaurer, der westlichen und östlichen Okkultisten, der jüdischen Intellektuellen, überhaupt der wurzellosen Internationalisten” (75). “Die offenen und geheimen Feinde deutschen Wesens aber, die waren auch unsere Gegner. Das sollte zu denken geben! Die schlimmste Verkennung der Wahrheit aber ist es, wenn etwa heute aus nationalsozialistischem Lager manchmal Anthroposophie und Waldorfschule in irgendeinen Zusammenhang mit jenen Gegnern gebracht werden.” (76) Anthroposophy, they write, means “Kampf gegen das Undeutsche” (77). The document ends by insisting that “der Sinn des nationalsozialistischen Führerwillens” is in harmony with anthroposophy (78). For a milder attempt to demonstrate the compatibility of anthroposophy and National Socialism see the seven-page unsigned typescript fragment from 1934 titled “Zur Frage der Beurteilung der Anthroposophie Rudolf Steiners” (BA R58/6193/1: 177-183).

⁵³ For general background on German cultural nationalism and continuities with Nazism see Ursula Härtl, Burkhard Stenzel, and Justus Ulbricht, eds., *Hier, hier ist Deutschland: Von nationalen Kulturkonzepten zur nationalsozialistischen Kulturpolitik* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1997).

to navigate the unpredictable public and private exigencies of the ‘national community’ in its actually existing forms. Through an explicit or implicit process of ideological negotiation, Steiner’s followers re-calibrated their vision of the German essence in response to widely varying demands and proposals from Nazi counterparts. The resulting interpretations were often enough not so much a hybrid of anthroposophical and National Socialist ideas as a re-statement of established anthroposophist themes in scantily modified rhetoric meant to be compatible with Nazi expectations.

One of the notable shifts in anthroposophical attitudes toward Nazism accompanied the start of the Second World War. Historian Eric Kurlander has observed that German liberals who had initially supported some aspects of National Socialism became more critical and oppositional with the outbreak of the war.⁵⁴ More or less the opposite process took place among anthroposophists. In many cases, the war brought out in a more pronounced fashion their German nationalism and their latent enthusiasm for the Nazi leadership and its project 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, even if presented in a spiritual idiom.⁵⁵ Internal correspondence among anthroposophists reveals an eager and enthused view of the

⁵⁴ Eric Kurlander, *Living with Hitler: Liberal Democrats in the Third Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁵⁵ Examples from *Demeter* are examined in the previous chapter. For examples from *Die Christengemeinschaft* see the October 1940 issue, 110-11, with a positive review by Emil Bock of a pamphlet on *Geistige und seelische Probleme im jetzigen Krieg* by a Wehrmacht general published by the Zentralverlag der NSDAP; and Gottfried Richter, “Am Rande Europas” *Die Christengemeinschaft* April 1941, 13. *Die Christengemeinschaft* also carried frequent advertisements for “Bücher für unsere Soldaten” and promotional inserts for various war support drives, complete with swastikas. See also Roman Boos, *Der Ordensstaat des Weissen Kreuzes* (Arlesheim: Hugi, 1941), 22-26, an anthroposophical attack on England condemning the British drive for world domination; and E. A. Karl Stockmeyer, “Das Ziel der deutschen Erziehung” (BA NS15/301: 58050), dated “Herbst 1939”: “Hier ist ein Kampf auszufechten, und er geht gegen den gleichen Feind, den wir heute mit den Waffen bezwingen müssen: England sucht nicht nur unsere Schiffe zu kapern, es kapert auch unsere Gedanken und hat sie seit Jahrhunderten zu unserem schwersten Unheil gekapert.”

war as an opportunity for their own projects to flourish.⁵⁶ In some cases, anthroposophists vocally supported the war even after the military tide turned against Germany.⁵⁷

Strong support for the German military effort and for the Nazi leadership's conduct of the war was abundantly evident in a series of articles by anthroposophist Jürgen von Grone from May 1940 to November 1942, all focused on the war and on Germany's enemies.⁵⁸ The 1940 articles deride the decadent French and the world-dominating British in particular, with an admixture of occult conspiracism, and defiantly champion Germany's world mission.⁵⁹ The articles are emphatically pro-

⁵⁶ See e.g. Franz Dreidax to RVBDW staff member Herr Beckmann, September 26, 1939 (BA R9349/2), and Erhard Bartsch to Alwin Seifert, November 4, 1939 (BA R9349/3/S); biodynamic officials were particularly energized by the war, thinking that their moment had finally come. After initially being called up for service, several of them were released from military duty in 1940 at Darré's request, including Erhard Bartsch (BA RK/I18: 1914) and his brother Hellmut Bartsch (BA RK/I18: 2104). See also Hermann Schneider to Erhard Bartsch, December 8, 1940 (BA R9349/3/Sch), with Schneider's manuscript "Gründung einer europäischen Hauptforschungsstätte für Lebensforschung," which praises Hitler and Mussolini for uniting Europe into one great community of destiny, and posits biodynamics as the key to achieving natural nutrition and healthy soil for the whole continent and restoring the peasantry as the lifeblood of the *Volk*. At times biodynamic officials expressed gratitude to Hitler and the German military for territorial conquests that greatly enlarged the possibilities for their own work. An article by Franz Dreidax, "Gesundes Brot aus gesundem Boden" *Leib und Leben* September 1940, 88, concludes: "Wenn schon jetzt von einer späteren Entwicklung gesprochen wird, so geschieht es in dem Bewußtsein, daß durch die Taten des Führers und des Heeres die Grundlagen für neue Großzügigkeit und für wirkliche Spannweite der zukünftigen Arbeiten geschaffen sind."

⁵⁷ Georg Halbe, "Unsterblichkeit" *Leib und Leben* March 1943, 23, characterized the battle of Stalingrad as a "geistiger Sieg" for Germany, and declared that Germany is fighting a "Kampf gegen die Finsternis" and that her fallen soldiers continue to fight in the heavens "an der Seite der Götter." War, Halbe explained, is the "Auswirkung geistiger Kämpfe, die sich auf Erden abspielt."

⁵⁸ The first in the series is Jürgen von Grone, "Zeugung und Geburt der Empire-Idee" *Wir und die Welt* May 1940, 204-08; the last is Jürgen von Grone, "Krise und Umschwung: Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen" *Wir und die Welt* November 1942, 414-18. See also the article by anthroposophist Wolfgang Schuchhardt, "Frankreich und der deutsche Geist" *Wir und die Welt* December 1940, 526-30, which celebrates the fall of France and praises "der Führer" and Petain. Anthroposophist Otto Julius Hartmann also published in *Wir und die Welt* during the war; cf. Hartmann, "Vom Sinn der menschlichen Aufrichtekraft" *Wir und die Welt* July 1941, 304-08.

⁵⁹ Jürgen von Grone, "Baumeister und Baugedanken des Empire" *Wir und die Welt* June 1940, 226-31, traces the "britischen Herrschaftsanspruch" to a far-flung masonic conspiracy involving "der rassebewußte Jude Disraeli" and "geheime Machtansprüche der englisch sprechenden Völker, die in den westlichen Bruderschaften gehegt und gepflegt wurden" (228). Jürgen von Grone, "In Memoriam Juli 1914" *Wir und die Welt* July 1940, 282-89, claims that WWI was planned and instigated by "englischen Logenkreisen" and "Freimaurer" in order to stifle Germany's mission and establish unchallenged British world hegemony, due to "angelsächsischen Rassenegoismus." The article depicts a shadowy combination of "Hocharistokratie und Plutokratie," "die Oberschicht der Lords und Gentlemen," "die führenden Kreise der Hochfinanz" and "Freimaurerlogen" relying on "okkulten

Nazi. Writing in the midst of the Battle of Britain, Grone blamed the war on the British, insisting that the British leadership “deliberately caused” the war and rejected the Führer’s generous offers for peace. Grone fully endorsed Hitler’s handling of the war and declared that the establishment of the Third Reich was the German people’s thoroughly justified response to the Versailles treaty, portraying National Socialism approvingly as the expression of German will and the herald of the German mission.⁶⁰ In March 1941 Grone claimed that Germany and Italy were fighting to free the European continent from British domination.⁶¹ His 1942 articles included paeans to Japan’s military glory and its war against the United States, as well as jeremiads against American and British imperialism.⁶² With occasional use of anthroposophist terminology, Grone offered a ringing endorsement of Nazi Germany’s military campaigns.

Esoteric conceptions of a German spiritual mission were thus congruent with military expansion and conquest. For some anthroposophists, the spiritual nature of the German essence demanded political embodiment in something like National

Methoden” and “Geheimlehren und Geheiminstitutionen” and “Geheimgesellschaften” (284). Grone then characterizes the current war as another British effort to maintain its imperial control of the world, “trotz weitestgehender Vorschläge und Bemühungen von seiten des Führers” (288). For similar claims by a major Nazi proponent of biodynamics see Fritz Hoffmann, “Totaler Krieg – Lebenskampf” *Leib und Leben* April 1940, 25-26.

⁶⁰ Jürgen von Grone, “Herrschaftsziele des Empire: Vom Weltkrieg bis zum deutsch-englischen Krieg der Gegenwart” *Wir und die Welt* September 1940, 377-79. Grone wrote: “Die Entstehung des Dritten Reiches ist identisch mit der großen deutschen Gegenbewegung gegen die Ordnung von Versailles. Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland ist von allem Anfang an als die elementare völkische Reaktion im Inneren und Äußeren gegen diese Ordnung entstanden.” (379)

⁶¹ Jürgen von Grone, “Der Kontinent durchdringt England” *Wir und die Welt* March 1941, 110-15: “Die deutsche Nation kämpft – mit Italien im Mittelmeerraum als Verbündetem – für die Befreiung des Kontinents von britischer Kontrolle.” (115) Jürgen von Grone, “Die Normannen erobern England” *Wir und die Welt* May 1941, 213-18, declares that no “Verständigung zwischen den großen Völkergruppen germanischen Blutes” will be possible “solange der britisch-angelsächsische Imperialismus seine Fangarme um Meere und Kontinente der Erde legen will” (218). Cf. Jürgen von Grone, “Kontrolle der Meere und Kontinente” *Wir und die Welt* January 1941, 28-32, and Grone, “Vor tausend Jahren: Germanen gegen Germanen in England” *Wir und die Welt* April 1941, 163-66.

⁶² Jürgen von Grone, “Von den geistigen Grundlagen des japanischen Einsatzes” *Wir und die Welt* June 1942, 222-24; Grone, “Vom Geist des abendländischen und des japanischen Rittertums” *Wir und die Welt* July 1942, 252-65; Grone, “Britisch-amerikanische Beziehungen im Wandel der Macht” *Wir und die Welt* October 1942, 379-82.

Socialism. According to Steiner's student Richard Karutz, writing in 1934, the Nazi swastika represented precisely the *spiritual* mission of Germany and its task of vanquishing materialism and inaugurating a new world of the spirit.⁶³ From this point of view, even anthroposophy's esoteric emphasis was compatible with Nazism. Steiner and his followers held that spiritual transformation was to be reflected in and instantiated in concrete social forms, and the Nazi revolution could appear as the realization of these expectations.⁶⁴ For other anthroposophists, the iconography invoked by Nazi leaders was auspiciously aligned with occult imagery.⁶⁵ Against this background, the war seemed a welcome harbinger, even a sign of messianic fulfillment.⁶⁶ Shielding the German essence from un-German influences and

⁶³ 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. 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 "fotomechanischer Nachdruck" of the original 1934 edition; cf. Richard Karutz, *Die Ursprache der Kunst* (Stuttgart: Mellinger, 1967), 130.

⁶⁴ For an early version of the view of spiritual forces as embodied in political, social, economic, and military events, and that the unfolding of the German mission is primarily spiritual but occurs through and is revealed in external developments, see Rittelmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner und das Deutschtum*.

⁶⁵ Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Vor dem Standbild des Erzengels Michael" *Die Christengemeinschaft* December 1933, 287-88, reprints a lengthy speech by a leader of the Hitler Youth built around the image of the Archangel Michael, with Rittelmeyer's introduction and conclusion praising its insightful sense of Michael's nature and mission. The figure of Michael plays a central role in anthroposophy, and is often associated directly with the German mission; for some of Steiner's teachings see Rudolf Steiner, *Die Sendung Michaels: Die Offenbarung der eigentlichen Geheimnisse des Menschenwesens* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1934), and Steiner, *Das Michael-Mysterium* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1930). On the political and cultural connotations of Archangel Michael imagery and its affiliations with the notion of a "deutscher Michel" see Tomasz Szarota, *Der deutsche Michel: Die Geschichte eines nationalen Symbols* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 1998).

⁶⁶ Emil Bock, "An die Gemeinden der Christengemeinschaft" *Mitteilungen aus der Christengemeinschaft* October 1939, 1: "Von Jahr zu Jahr bekommen wir es deutlicher zu spüren, daß wir in ein michaelisches Zeitalter eingetreten sind. Der Erzengel Michael steht heute als der machtvoll vorwärtstreibende Zeitenführer über den Völkern." Bock provided an esoteric interpretation of the current war, adding: "Jeder möge jetzt die Liebe zu seinem Volk vertiefen und seinen Opferwillen verstärken."

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,' which they construed as the eventual overcoming of racial and national differences. This framework raised a series of challenging questions when anthroposophists confronted Nazi race thinking. While both worldviews shared an attachment to the Aryan myth, for instance, their respective interpretations sometimes differed considerably, and evident similarities in terminology were accompanied by significant differences in detail. The nuances and complexities in this contested relationship can be difficult to discern and analyze, in part because of the surprisingly underdeveloped state of research on the syncretic character of National Socialist racial thought.⁶⁷ A recent assessment by historian Horst Junginger cautions against the widespread tendency to "reduce the race concepts of National Socialism to a biological materialism."⁶⁸ Biological versions of 'race' were undoubtedly central to much of Nazi ideology, but they were by no means uniform or monolithic, and the more

⁶⁷ The existing literature 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); Benoit Massin, "Anthropologie und Humangenetik im Nationalsozialismus" in Heidrun Kaupen-Haas and Christian Saller, eds., *Wissenschaftlicher Rassismus: Analysen einer Kontinuität in den Human- und Naturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999), 12-64; Roland Staudinger, *Rassenrecht und Rassenstaat: Die nationalsozialistische Vision eines "biologischen totalen Staates"* (Hall: Berenkamp, 1999); 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); Hans-Christian Harten, Uwe Neirich, and Matthias Schwerendt, *Rassenhygiene als Erziehungsideologie des Dritten Reichs* (Berlin: Akademie, 2006); Eric Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof: Genealogy, Racial Science, and the Final Solution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

⁶⁸ Horst Junginger, "Introduction" to Junginger, ed., *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*, 18. As Junginger points out, "the idea of an Aryan race relied to a great extent on the idea of an Aryan culture and religion," and he notes "the amalgamation of race and religion" that accompanied the rise of Aryan myth (19).

materialist variants co-existed with idealist and spiritual conceptions. The very notion of race in both popular and academic discourse was equivocal, ambivalent, and multidimensional, and Nazi racial theorists tried to define the concept and pin it down as a natural and scientific category, thus highlighting its biological aspects. National Socialist race thinking nonetheless contained conspicuous ambiguities, complications, and contradictions.

These complexities conflicted with and continually resisted the efforts by various Nazi officials to delineate an overarching framework for racial ideology as a whole, with ongoing quarrels between rival Nordic or Aryan theories, anthropological or cultural or genetic approaches, amateur *völkisch* philosophers and trained biologists, and so forth.⁶⁹ 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 around a consistent or static understanding of race, Nazi treatments of the topic were remarkably labile and heterogeneous. Religious, cultural, and spiritual factors played an important part in these variegated discussions of the nature and meaning of race. Prominent representatives of a partially ‘spiritual’ understanding of race in Nazi contexts included Alfred Rosenberg and Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss, both of whom attributed particular significance to the “racial soul.”⁷⁰ Clauss’s work was especially important in this regard, constituting a counter-

⁶⁹ Background on the varieties of Nazi racial thought and the incoherent nature of Nazi racial typologies can be found in Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, chapters 7 and 8; Emmerich, *Zur Kritik der Volkstumsideologie*; Lutzhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland*; Götz, “Volksgemeinschaft”; David Redles, “The Nazi Soteriology of Race” in Redles, *Hitler’s Millennial Reich*, 63-70; Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippenmann, “Barbarous utopias: racial ideologies in Germany” in Burleigh and Ippenmann *The Racial State: Germany, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 23-43; and the section “Volk und Rasse” in Claus-Ekkehard 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.

⁷⁰ According to Rosenberg, race was “a mystical synthesis” of soul and body; “Each race has its soul, each soul its race”: Alfred Rosenberg, *Race and Race History* (London: Cape, 1970), 83-84. His descriptions of Aryan and Nordic race types reflect this premise: “Aryan India bequeathed to the world

weight to the predominantly biological theories of competing Nazi authors such as Walter Groß or Hans F. K. Günther.⁷¹ Viewpoints such as Rosenberg's and Clauss's provided a point of entry for anthroposophists interested in assessing Nazi perspectives on race.

The foremost anthroposophical race theorist during the Nazi era was Richard Karutz, who devoted substantial attention to the work of Nazi racial experts. In early 1931, two years before the Nazis came to power, Karutz recommended Günther's *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* to the readers of anthroposophy's flagship journal.⁷² Günther, the principal exponent of Nazi racial theory, appreciated Karutz's

a metaphysic whose depths have yet to be plumbed, even today. The Aryan Persian composed for us the religious myths from which we still draw sustenance. Doric Hellas dreamed of a beauty, which, as we see it in completed form before us, will never be further developed. Italian Rome illustrates for us an example of formal state loyalty; how a threatened human community must organize and defend itself. And German Europe bequeathed to the world the radiant ideal of humanity, as exemplified in its teaching that character value must be the foundation of all morality, and its paean to the highest value of the Nordic being -- to the idea of freedom of conscience and of honour." (ibid., 83) The idea of a "racial soul" was central to Rosenberg's work, and as in anthroposophy it was directly tied to "blood"; for a detailed explication see Alfred Baeumler, *Alfred Rosenberg und Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Hoheneichen, 1943), 66-72, 90-103. Cf. Kroll, *Utopie als Ideologie*, 101-53, and Christian Strub, "Gesinnungsrassismus: Zur NS-"Ethik" der Absonderung am Beispiel von Rosenbergs Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts" in Werner Konitzer and Raphael Gross, eds., *Moralität des Bösen: Ethik und nationalsozialistische Verbrechen* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2009), 171-96. For a non-Nazi contemporary analysis that placed central emphasis on "the soul-characteristics of races" see Eric Voegelin, *Rasse und Staat* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933).

⁷¹ See above all Ludwig Ferdinand Clauß, *Rasse und Seele: Eine Einführung in die Gegenwart* (Munich: Lehmann, 1926); cf. the eighteenth edition: Clauß, *Rasse und Seele: Eine Einführung in den Sinn der leiblichen Gestalt* (Munich: Lehmann, 1943), as well as Clauß, *Von Seele und Antlitz der Rassen und Völker* (Munich: Lehmann, 1929) and Clauß, *Die nordische Seele: Eine Einführung in die Rassenseelenkunde* (Munich: Lehmann, 1934). For an example of his antisemitic writings see L. F. Clauß, "Woran erkennt man den Juden?" *Wir und die Welt* November 1940, 449-61. Due in part to conflicts with other Nazi race theorists, Clauss eventually fell out of official favor after 1942, though he continued to work with the SS. For background compare Harten, Neirich, and Schwerendt, *Rassenhygiene als Erziehungsideologie des Dritten Reichs*, 11-18, 137-47; Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich*, 56-60, 183-86; Felix Wiedemann, "Zur völkischen Orientromantik des Ludwig Ferdinand Clauß" *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 61 (2009), 1-24. The study by Peter Weingart, *Doppel-Leben: Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss zwischen Rassenforschung und Widerstand* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1995) displays a significantly apologetic tendency but includes important historical context. A further Nazi proponent of "Rassenseelenkunde" was Clauss's student Sigrid Hunke, who also worked with Hauer's *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung* and Himmler's *Ahnenerbe*; for a critical overview of her ideas and career see Horst Junginger "Sigrid Hunke: Europe's New Religion and its Old Stereotypes" in Cancik and Puschner, eds., *Antisemitismus, Paganismus, Völkische Religion*, 151-62.

⁷² Richard Karutz, "Über Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 4, 1931, 6-7. Karutz avers that Günther's findings can be better explained through supersensible causes than through a natural science

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, for an anthroposophist audience.⁷³ The exchange of ideas was not merely theoretical; Karutz explicitly endorsed the Nazi thinkers' strictures against "race mixing" between Europeans and non-white peoples, while arguing for a more lenient approach to mixture among different European peoples.⁷⁴ Karutz published a starker warning about "race mixing" in another leading anthroposophist periodical in 1930. His argument employed classic esoteric ideas in order to make a forceful case against interracial marriage.⁷⁵

If there were no spiritually significant racial differences, Karutz reasoned, then there would be nothing wrong with racially mixed marriages. Since profound racial differences are a spiritual fact, however, interracial marriage represents a major threat to spiritual-racial evolution and the 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. Though granting that eventually race will dissolve entirely, Karutz rejected the principle that "there are no inferior races" as materialistic and shortsighted, because it ignored the direct spiritual correlation between physiology and the development of consciousness.

approach. Race itself is "physisch-sichtbar," he explains, but behind it stands the "Rassengeist hinter der Rasse" (7).

⁷³ Richard Karutz, "Zur Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* August 23, 1931, 268-70, recounting his correspondence with Günther and reviewing Darré's 1930 book *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*. Karutz's review of Darré's work is sympathetic but at times critical; he portrays Darré as groping toward a genuine analysis of the spiritual background of race, but without the right conceptual tools which anthroposophy can provide. "Es braucht darum gar nicht zu einem Widerspruch zwischen völkischer und geisteswissenschaftlicher Anschauung zu kommen, sofern nur jene auf das Wesentliche im Blute, das Geistige im Blute achten wollte." (269) See also Karutz, "Zur Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 3, 1932, 3-6.

⁷⁴ Richard Karutz, "Über Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 11, 1931, 13-14. Karutz draws a sharp contrast between "Rassenmischung" "zwischen Weissen und Farbigen," which he also refers to as "Mischungen zwischen Europäern und Negern," and "Mischungen zwischen Europäern," rejecting the "fremdrassige" type of "Mischung," particularly in the context of the "Kolonialproblem, Negerproblem, Schwarze Schmach-Problem" (14).

⁷⁵ Richard Karutz, "Zur Frage von Rassebildung und Mischehe" *Die Drei* May 1930, 94-102.

The proper maturation of the 'I' required firm measures in order to avoid a "mish-mash of blood," and this task called for an "internal racial struggle" to resist harmful admixture with other races.⁷⁶ If this mish-mash is not prevented, it will mean regressing to earlier evolutionary stages and racial-spiritual stagnation. Racial mixture brings spiritual disharmony.

Karutz offered detailed examples of this process, arguing that through the dynamics of spiritual race development blacks will 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. On anthroposophical grounds, he noted, this gradual disappearance of black people and Jews represented significant evolutionary progress. Racial mixture damaged this progress and damaged humanity. Citing Günther on the unfortunate characteristics of *Mischlinge*, Karutz affirmed that racial purity must be understood spiritually if it is to be effective. Rejecting legal sanctions against mixed marriages, he argued that rather than outlawing such shortsighted unions, Germans and other Europeans must recognize that race mixing is "contrary to evolution" and freely repudiate it on their own.⁷⁷ On the basis of anthroposophist considerations, Karutz decisively rejected intermarriage between whites and blacks and between gentiles and Jews.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 97: the proper development of the I "verhindert den Mischmasch des Blutes. Es soll ihn wenigstens verhindern, dem gilt unser innerer Rassenkampf." Anthroposophy understands "den Rasseerhaltungsprozeß als den geistigen Prozeß, der für die Seelenentwicklung fortlaufen muß bis zur Ichentfaltung, und der uns äußerlich als Vererbung erscheint." (98) Karutz also states that "der Neger" yearns for a "Wiedergeburt der Schwarzen als Weiße, er sehnt sich nach dem Weißen" (99).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 102: "Die Einsicht in die geistigen Wurzeln der menschlichen Organisation und in die wahre Bedeutung des Mensch-seins lehnt die Mischehe ab." In 1932 Karutz wrote: "Die Fernehe (Exogamie), die heute noch herrscht, bedeutet nicht die Erlaubnis jeder Rassenmischung, jeder Mischehe. Die geistigen Organisationen müssen sich schon ähneln. 'Schwarz-Weiß' ähnelt sich zu wenig. Es gibt schon eine Eugenik, aber aus der Kenntnis der Geistorganisation heraus." Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde*, 26. Lieferung, "Lebensstufen," 43. He maintained the same position in 1939: Richard Karutz, "Mysterienschaten über Afrika" *Das Goetheanum* August 27, 1939, 276-77, rejects "Rassenmischung" between "der schwarzen und weissen Rasse" as a "biologischer Irrtum" that disrupts the proper course of incarnations (276).

With articulated views like these years before 1933, Karutz unsurprisingly 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.⁷⁸ 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 his 1934 book *Rassenfragen*, which carried the imprimatur of the Goetheanum, anthroposophy's world headquarters in Dornach, Switzerland.⁷⁹ Here Karutz outlined a racially based anthroposophist ethnology as an alternative to existing 'materialist' approaches. The book began by charging that mainstream anthropology did not take race seriously, by focusing on merely cultural and psychological factors while ignoring physical ones. According to Karutz, this was a profound mistake; ethnology cannot be understood correctly if its physical and racial facets are not given their due. Characterizing the ostensibly prevailing non-racial view as "materialist," Karutz posited his own esoteric approach to anthropology as the necessary antidote to such race-blind materialism. Only a racial ethnology, he explained, could perceive "the true cosmic spirit" that lies behind external appearances; a non-racial view was like "describing the outer shell without reaching the inner core."⁸⁰

⁷⁸ For an 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. Cf. also the brief mention of Karutz as purveyor of occultist ethnology in Hauschild, ed., *Lebenslust und Fremdenfurcht: Ethnologie im Dritten Reich*, 7. His anthroposophical biography paints a very different portrait, claiming that under the Nazis "wurden seine Werke verboten, die Bestände eingestampft." Matthias Karutz, "Richard Karutz" in von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 349.

⁷⁹ Richard Karutz, *Rassenfragen* (Stuttgart: Ernst Surkamp, 1934), the culmination of his *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde*, co-published by the Goetheanum in Dornach.

⁸⁰ Karutz, *Rassenfragen*, 14.

In place of the wrongheaded ‘materialist’ framework which failed to take heed of the crucial importance of race, Karutz proposed an esoteric ethnology, insisting that “Rudolf Steiner’s anthroposophy” was the only source for the proper understanding of race. An anthroposophical account of race was not merely spiritual, he explained, but combined body, soul, and spirit into a unity. This approach gave central attention to “heredity” as “the indispensable mark of race.”⁸¹ Karutz argued that the new Nazi guidelines for racial instruction in schools did not go far enough in rejecting materialism; in his view these theories were too zoological and hence missed the special spiritual qualities of “our race.” Spiritual principles must inform “the political doctrine of race” if it is to be effective, and this could only happen through “the spiritual science of Rudolf Steiner.”⁸² These remarks introduced a full-blown endorsement of Nazi racial policy as anchored in spiritual reality: for Karutz, Nazism represented a promising 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.⁸³

⁸¹ Ibid., 9, 21. According to Karutz, “Rassen sind sinnvolle Planungen, denn die Entwicklung der Menschheit braucht sie, weil sie das Bewußtseinschicksal der Seelen bestimmen.” (22) “Die Verschiedenheit der Rassen ist in der Verschiedenheit der menschlichen Seelen ur-veranlagt und von ihr bedingt. Nicht umgekehrt. Die Seelenart ist nicht Folge der Rasse, sondern die Rasse ist Folge der Seele.” (31) He described the physically and spiritually debilitated state of “niederer farbiger Völker” (22) and claimed that the great differences in physical race characteristics between “Europeans” and “Negroes” are due to “reale geistige Kräfte” (32). “Rasse,” Karutz held, is “materialistisch unerklärlich.” Race is “kein abstrakter Begriff,” he emphasized, “sondern lebendiges Leben tätiger Wesen im unendlich mannigfaltigen Treiben des göttlichen Daseins.” (30) Only through becoming conscious of “Rasse” and “Volk,” Karutz declared, “kann überhaupt erst wahre Volksgemeinschaft entstehen.” (31) With the rise of National Socialism, he affirmed, “Man gewinnt auch die positive Einstellung zur Rasse wieder, die unter dem wissenschaftlichen Materialismus verlorengegangen war.” (38) In contrast to the now obsolete materialism, his anthroposophical “Rassen-Seelen-Lehre” posited a “Dreigliederung” of “Leib, Seele, und Geist” (44).

⁸² Ibid., 23, 28. Karutz insisted that the Nordic race did not evolve lighter skin in response to environmental factors, instead “die nordische Rasse war infolge des besonderen Eingreifens der Lichtkräfte *immer heller!*” (25)

⁸³ Ibid., 32-33. “Die nationalsozialistische Völker- und Rassenpolitik, die das Eigenrecht der anderen aus der Ur-Verschiedenheit natürlicher Veranlagung heraus anerkennt (und für sich fordert), ist in der geistigen Wirklichkeit verankert.” (32) After quoting Steiner and Hitler, Karutz invoked Rosenberg and claimed that a spiritual understanding of race would make Nazi “Rassenschutz” stronger. “Eugenik gewinnt erst ihren vollen Sinn, wenn sie das in der Vererbung empfangene Bild aus bewußter

Karutz considered his own anthroposophical conception of the relation between soul and race (“Seelentum in Rassentum”) confirmed by National Socialist racial ideology. Citing Clauss frequently, he elaborated an esoteric view of the “racial soul” and “racial destiny,” highlighting in particular the heroic character of the “Aryans” and the “Nordic race.” Since race represents the connection between the physical and spiritual, he argued, eugenic measures must be based on spiritual insight.⁸⁴ In an extended argument against “race mixing,” Karutz maintained that mixture is only acceptable between peoples of similar soul and spiritual quality; hence Germans could intermarry among themselves, despite distinctions between North Germans and South Germans or Alpine, Baltic, and Nordic stocks. But intermarriage between Germans and non-Germans or between Europeans and “colored races” was highly detrimental.⁸⁵ Even intermarriage between Germans and French was suspect,

Erkenntnis pflegt und durch Fernhalten von Schädlingen der Erbmasse möglichst rein erhält.” (33) “Eine Abkehr vom materialistischen Denken würde sofort die Empfindlichkeit der Rassenlehre beseitigen,” he explained, by restoring its spiritual basis, but its practical application would remain unchanged: “Für die praktischen Forderungen eugenischer Lebenshaltung ändert sich damit nichts.” (35)

⁸⁴ Ibid., 36: “Diese beiden Faktoren muß die Eugenik immer zusammen sehen. Die Heilighaltung des Blutes gegenüber Durchfremdungen, Art- und Richtungslosigkeiten nützt nur, wenn sie aus Bewußtsein für das geistig-Hintergründige und Bleibende das Physische pflegt. Materialistische Eugeniker würden sich schwer täuschen, wenn sie das Blut als Stoff und nicht als Träger der Ich-Kräfte zum Ausgangspunkt ihrer Diagnosen nehmen wollten.” For Karutz, “die Pflege des Ich-Impulses” was “die dringlichste und einzige Forderung rassischer Eugenik” (47). By incorporating both the “leiblich und seelisch” aspects of race, a spiritual “Rassenkunde” could provide “eine wissenschaftliche Grundlage für die Richtung einer völkischen Eugenik” (60).

⁸⁵ Ibid., 49-55. Karutz argued that “eine Mischehe zwischen Europäern und Farbigen schon rein physisch angesehen ungut ist, denn die körperlichen Merkmale sind von den beiderseitigen Rassen für ganz verschiedene Bewußtseine ausgesucht worden. Keines von diesen kann mit der fremden körperlichen Anlage etwas anfangen.” He thus firmly rejected “Blutmischung zwischen Europäern und Farbigen” (51). According to Karutz, “die schwarze Rasse ist eine irdisch-physische Abirrung vom geistig-lichten Ideal ‘Mensch’. Weiß und Schwarz stehen hier nicht nur für den Gegensatz der Rassenfarbe sondern auch für den Gegensatz geistige lichte Welt und physische dunkle Welt, für den Gegensatz endlich von Leben und Tod” (42). “Der Farbige ist farbig, weil er seelisch zu wenig durch- icht ist.” (40) Opposition to racial mixing was central to Karutz’s work both before and after 1933. In anthroposophical terms, his logic was that mixture between Europeans and ‘colored races’ would produce a *Seelenart* so full of discrepancies and disharmonies that it would be useless for the formation of the ‘I’ and contribute nothing to evolutionary progress. In addition, souls cannot obtain the proper racial education if they are incarnated in a mixed-race body, as they will not receive a full experience of either of the races. If such mixtures nonetheless sometimes occurred, they could provide the possibility

because the “national spirits” governing the two peoples would be evolutionarily at odds.⁸⁶ Quoting Hitler approvingly on the “Erhaltung des Volkes,” Karutz went on to condemn mixture between Aryans and Jews.⁸⁷ He then quoted both Hitler and Steiner again in support of a vigilant defense of the German *Volk* from foreign spiritual and physical influences.⁸⁸ Anthroposophy’s ‘spiritual science’ and the new worldview of the Third Reich complemented and mutually reinforced one another.⁸⁹

For Karutz in 1934, the Nazi ‘revolution’ was a “popular uprising” in which the German people followed the call of their *Volksgeist* or national spirit.⁹⁰ He expressly and resoundingly endorsed the new regime’s race principles, providing an extended anthroposophical justification of them. But eugenic measures and racial policies were not enough, he concluded; not only the “racial elements of the nation” must be protected, but also its spiritual qualities, the “soul of the race.”⁹¹ Building an esoteric account around a spiritually determined postulate of racial inequality, he found far-reaching common ground with Nazi racial theorists, invoking not just figures like Clauss, Rosenberg, or Günther but also Eugen Fischer and Fritz Lenz.⁹²

for a higher soul to forego an incarnation in a higher race and instead incarnate in a lower race in order to take on a leadership role and help the group move forward evolutionarily.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 54-55. Karutz characterized Jews as “fremdrassig” (55) and warned that Jewish “Versippung” impeded the “arische Weltaufgabe” (54).

⁸⁸ Ibid., 62-63. Between the quote from Hitler and the quote from Steiner, Karutz observed: “Das Volkstum muß als eine notwendige Grundlage seelischer Entwicklung gewahrt, eugenisch gepflegt und, wenn nicht anders möglich, kämpferisch verteidigt werden.” (62) For Karutz, “geisteswissenschaftliche Gedanken führen nicht von den nationalen Belangen ab, sondern zu ihnen hin.” (63)

⁸⁹ Ibid., 63-64, arguing that anthroposophy and National Socialism are mutually complementary and that their racial theories fulfill and complete one another. “Ich wiederhole, daß sich hierin die auf Blut, Boden, Vererbung aufgebaute Weltanschauung des Dritten Deutschen Reiches und die Geisteswissenschaft nicht widersprechen.” (63)

⁹⁰ Ibid., 68; he also refers to the Nazi ‘revolution’ as the “Volkserhebung des Dritten Reiches” (79) and “unsere völkische Wiedergeburt” (61).

⁹¹ Ibid., 83. Karutz added: “Eugenik kann nur als eine geistige helfen.” (84)

⁹² See e.g. *ibid.*, 50. Karutz also quoted Günther approvingly in his *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde*, 42. Lieferung, “Wirtschaft” (1934), 35, and elsewhere. Cf. Richard Karutz, “Das finnische Gesicht” *Das Goetheanum* January 13, 1935, 11-13, which cites Günther positively and praises the “nordische Rassenform” (11), its “germanisches Blut” and “die rassische Zukunft” of the Nordic race (12).

Karutz moreover praised National Socialism as a spiritual movement, and avowed that Hitler and Steiner offered similar racial teachings.⁹³ He was not alone in his views. His works garnered very appreciative reviews in the anthroposophist press and were cited by various anthroposophical authors addressing racial questions.⁹⁴ Other anthroposophists shared his opposition to race mixing or supported Nazi efforts to maintain the physical integrity of the German people.⁹⁵ Anthroposophist publications provided sympathetic overviews of Nazi racial theories as late as 1936.⁹⁶ Even the work of Karutz, however, did not impress anthroposophy's adversaries in the anti-occultist grouping in the SD and Gestapo. They pointed to his racial writings as a prime example of occult obscurantism.⁹⁷

⁹³ Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde*, 38. Lieferung, "Gesellschaftliches Leben" (1934), 4-5. After juxtaposing quotations from Steiner and Hitler on racial evolution, Karutz wrote of Hitler: "Er macht die höhere Entwicklung der Völker von deren ungleichen Zusammensetzung aus einer organisatorisch befähigten und einer zum Herrschen nicht befähigten Rasse abhängig, er empfindet diese Schichtung als eine uralte, bis in die Rassenbildung zurückgehende [...] Das setzt einen geistigen Entstehungsgrund für die Rassen voraus, der Nationalsozialismus ist, vielen unbewußt, tatsächlich eine geistige Bewegung, Rassenbildung und Rassenschichtung in Europa gehen tatsächlich bis in jene atlantischen Zeiten zurück, von denen Rudolf Steiner spricht." (5)

⁹⁴ Examples include the extremely positive review of Karutz's 1938 book *Die afrikanische Seele* in *Das Goetheanum* June 5, 1938, 181-82; Hippel, *Mensch und Gemeinschaft*, 25, quoting Karutz at length; Arnold Wadler, *Der Turm von Babel: Urgemeinschaft der Sprachen* (Basel: Geering, 1935), with quotations from and advertisements for Karutz's works; and Guenther Wachsmuth, *Bilder und Beiträge zur Mysterien- und Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit* (Dresden: Weise, 1938), which quotes Karutz throughout. See also Karutz, "Von der Welt der Toten" *Die Christengemeinschaft* November 1937, 197-201.

⁹⁵ Hugo Wetzel, "Heldentum und Christentum" *Die Christengemeinschaft* March 1937, 367-69, explored "die Bedeutung der Rasse" within the context of "dem erwachten völkischen Empfinden unsrer Tage." According to Wetzel, anthroposophy provided answers which "der Menschheit helfen kann gegenüber dem durch Rassenvermischung herbeigeführten Niedergang des Menschengeschlechtes." (368) Also writing in 1937, Hans Erhard Lauer praised the regime's efforts to strengthen the German *Volk* both bodily and spiritually and for making these efforts a requirement of every individual. The old practice of leaving this to "Zufall" exposed "die leibliche Existenz dieses Volkstums" to "den schwersten Gefährdungen." But the Nazi government has taken charge of matters: "Darum wird heute gefordert, daß jeder Einzelne mit vollem Bewußtsein und unter strenger Befolgung gewisser Richtlinien, die hiefür aufgestellt werden, an der Erhaltung der physischen Gesundheit und an der Erfüllung der geistigen Sendung des deutschen Volkes mithelfe." (Lauer, *Die Volksseelen Europas*, 163) Lauer went on to say that in order to succeed, such physical measures must be completed through spiritual measures.

⁹⁶ For a brief and congenial synopsis of various Nazi racial theories, including Günther's, see Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Neue Stimmen zur Rassenfrage" *Die Christengemeinschaft* May 1936, 62.

⁹⁷ The SD document titled "Zitate aus der Zeitschrift 'Die Drei'" (BA R58/6191: 331) includes several passages from Karutz, "Zur Frage von Rassenbildung und Mischehe"; the SD analysts did not find his arguments to their liking. Excerpts from Karutz's work also formed an important part of the

Aside from Karutz, a number of anthroposophists developed Steiner's race doctrines further in the context of the Third Reich, often echoing themes from other esoteric works. Wolfgang Moldenhauer, for example, 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" correlated to lower rungs on the evolutionary ladder.⁹⁸ 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.⁹⁹ Other anthroposophists characterized "primitive" racial groups as spiritually undeveloped creatures similar to animals, or expressed anxieties about an assault by the "colored world" against Europe.¹⁰⁰ Several

comprehensive SD report from May 1936 titled "Die Anthroposophie" (BA R58/6191/2: 366-400), which focused particular attention on the unacceptably unorthodox nature of anthroposophical race doctrines. The partial reproduction of this document in Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 383-89, omits the substantial quotations from Karutz, which the SD took to be anti-racist. In the eyes of the SD analysts, anthroposophy had nothing in common with Nazi racial thought: "Die Steiner'sche Anthroposophie ist letztlich rein individualistisch, ohne dem Volk einen dem Individuum übergeordneten Wert anzuerkennen. Sie ist weiterhin dem nat. soz. Rassegedanken völlig fremd und vertritt eine abwegige Lehre von der Herrschaft des rein-Geistigen." ("Sachhinweise für die Vernehmungen der Anhänger okkultur Lehren," June 1941, BA R58/5713/1: 226)

⁹⁸ Wolfgang Moldenhauer, "Erinnerungen zur Völkerkunde" *Das Goetheanum* November 6, 1938, 359-60. The article quotes Karutz extensively. According to Moldenhauer, "Die im Verband farbiger Rassenstämme zusammenlebenden Einzelmenschen empfinden sich nicht als freie geistige Individualitäten." (359) See also Wolfgang Moldenhauer, "Naturvölker und Seelenvölker" *Das Goetheanum* April 9, 1939, 115-16.

⁹⁹ Elisabeth Dank, "Die Neger in den Vereinigten Staaten" *Die Christengemeinschaft* September 1933, 187-89. Dank rebuffed the idea of "uneingeschränkte Gleichberechtigung" and claimed that only racial-spiritual insight could lead "zur Lösung des Negerproblems." "Soll dieses Problem überhaupt gelöst werden, ist eine Vorbedingung dazu notwendig: Einsicht in die ineinander und nebeneinander lebenden realen Wesenheiten von Rasse, Nation, Volk, Einzel-Mensch." (188) She flatly rejected "Was auf dem Gebiet der Rasse unmöglich ist – die Blutmischung und Amalgamierung, von den Weißen instinktiv richtigerweise abgelehnt" (189).

¹⁰⁰ See e.g. Ernst von Hippel's 1938 book *Afrika als Erlebnis des Menschen*, or his *Mensch und Gemeinschaft*, 22, which states that aboriginal peoples are remnants of the Lemurians, while "die Neger verkörpern in ihrem Leben ein zurückgebliebenes Sein." Emil Bock, "Europa-Dämmerung?" *Die Christengemeinschaft* September 1938, 161-63, declares that European Christianity must overcome "die Religionen Asiens und Afrikas" and that only European "spirituelle Wissenschaft" is capable of "die asiatisch-afrikanische Geistigkeit zu überwinden" (162). According to Bock, "Eine triumphierende Zukunft Europas kann nur aus einem erneuerten kosmischen Christentum hervorblühen." "Nur durch

of these occult treatments of racial themes exhibited a noteworthy intertwining of spiritual and scientific discourses, with detailed claims about physical characteristics such as skin pigmentation and bodily constitution side by side with discussions of soul qualities and spiritual forces. For anthroposophists, the “colored races” retained impressive physical abilities, but the white race cultivates *Denken* or thinking.¹⁰¹ The myriad contrasts between Europeans and non-white races reflected markedly different levels of evolutionary development and unfolding of consciousness.¹⁰²

In some cases, anthroposophical statements on race during the Nazi era brought together longstanding tropes from Steiner’s own work with newly fashionable Aryan and Nordic themes. An October 1933 article by August Pauli greeted the recent 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 blood and the laws of heredity.¹⁰³ A March 1935 article by

eine wirkliche *geistige* Überlegenheit wird Europa dem gigantischen Ansturm der farbigen Welt standzuhalten vermögen.” (163) Friedrich Rittelmeyer remarked in 1931 that the “aussterbenden niederen Volksrassen” are disappearing because “wenige Seele mehr da sind, die in diesen untergehenden Völkern ihre Entwicklungsbedingungen finden.” (*Die Christengemeinschaft* April 1931, 28)

¹⁰¹ Franz Fuchs, “Weisse und farbige Rassen” *Das Goetheanum* April 9, 1939, 116-17, includes detailed claims about “Neger,” “Indianer,” “Mongolen,” etc., whose racial features are a result of spiritual forces directly correlated to intellectual immaturity. “Im Denken aber wirken geistige Lichtkräfte intensiver Art und dulden den Farbstoff in der Haut nicht lange, den äusseres Licht schafft. Sie machen den Menschen zum Weissen.” (117) For anthroposophy, “thinking” has a generally positive connotation, in contrast to “intellectualism”; at times the contrast takes the form of an opposition between revitalized German spiritual thinking and French or Jewish abstract and formal thinking.

¹⁰² Ludwig Paul, “Die ‘Farbige Front’” *Das Goetheanum* April 9, 1939, 117-19, wrote that the “polare Stellung Europas und des asiatischen Ostens” represented “den Gegensatz zweier verschiedener Bewusstseinsstufen menschheitlicher Entwicklung” (118). Paul cited Steiner’s teaching that Europeans have achieved white skin as a sign of their successful integration of the spiritual and the physical. See also 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.

¹⁰³ August Pauli, “Blut und Geist” *Die Christengemeinschaft* October 1933, 215-17. “Dieser nordische Glaube mit seiner entscheidenden Betonung des Volksgedankens nicht nur, sondern vor allem des Rassegedankens ist eine Bewegung, deren positive Bedeutung wir keineswegs verkennen. Gerade wir Deutsche haben eine Belebung des Volksempfindens sehr nötig. Sehr viel leibseelische Dekadenz, die sich bei uns zeigt, kommt nur daher, daß man die in der Vererbung des Blutes wirksamen Gesetze nicht gekannt und nicht beachtet hat.” (216) See also August Pauli, “Gustav Frenssen und Ludwig Müller als Wortführer arteigenen Glaubens” *Die Christengemeinschaft* June 1936, 84-89, and Pauli, “‘Sünde’ und

Sigismund von Gleich asserted that human evolution must be led by the “Aryan race” and that capitulating to spiritual attacks by the Turanians, Tartars, Mongolians and other “yellow peoples” would endanger this all-important Aryan leadership. These non-Aryan racial groups were the carriers of physical and spiritual decadence.¹⁰⁴ In Gleich’s depiction, Asian peoples were the offspring of archaic Atlantean sub-races who practiced “black magic,” and their present descendants included not only the Chinese and Turks but also the Jews, who were partly of Turanian origin. Both the Mongols and the Semites were “born financiers and clever merchants.” According to Gleich, the “Asiatic barbarism” of the Bolsheviks was due to the fact that most of their leaders were Turanians and Jews. These insidious influences represented an ominous “Ahrimanic and demonic world” threatening Germany from the West as well as the East.¹⁰⁵

The menacing specter of Jewish influence, which played a role in a variety of anthroposophical contexts, 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: materialism, intellectualism, egoism, rootlessness, dry abstraction, soulless pedantry, commodification, critical acuity rather than creativity, and the failures of liberalism and rationalism. Traditional antisemitic motifs formed a substantial part of anthroposophical reflections on racial and ethnic questions, and the Jews were often a favorite example of spiritual anachronism and evolutionary

‘Selbstschöpfung’: Aus Anlaß von Alfred Rosenberg’s Schrift ‘Protestantische Rompilger’” *Die Christengemeinschaft* December 1937, 239-42: “Es ist gar nicht richtig, was oft gesagt wird, daß das Christentum die unterschiedslose Gleichheit aller Rassen, Völker, Menschen behauptete.” (241)

¹⁰⁴ Sigismund von Gleich, “Turanisch-mongolische Wesenszüge” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* March 1935, 5-12.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 10, 11: Mitteleuropa is threatened from both sides by Ahrimanic Turanian-Asian-Jewish tendencies, in both their “westlich-französisch und östlich-russisch” forms.

stagnation.¹⁰⁶ But the esoteric variants of antisemitic belief that arose repeatedly in anthroposophist publications were importantly different from the predominant versions of Nazi antisemitism, with its strongly phobic cast and its exterminationist trajectory. While Nazism demanded the complete separation and expulsion of Jewish elements from the German *Volk*, anthroposophy called for absorbing erstwhile Jews into the spiritual community of the nation in order to neutralize and eliminate their residual Jewish characteristics. 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.¹⁰⁷ This notion fundamentally conflicted with Nazi standards of racial purity.

The extreme form of antisemitism cultivated by Hitler and his followers is often seen as a primary example of the Nazi movement’s biological racism. Because the Nazis regarded Jews as essentially 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, including several that bore parallels to various occult beliefs. For some Nazis, Jews were not so much a race as a counter-race, a demonic force in human form. In addition, the racial theories invoked by Nazi antisemites frequently featured not only a prominent apocalyptic dimension but a powerfully redemptive orientation that went far beyond the notion of Jews as a

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Staudenmaier, “Rudolf Steiner and the Jewish Question.”

¹⁰⁷ Assimilationist forms of antisemitism could be found within the *völkisch* movement as well, which sometimes encouraged Jews to become ‘true’ Germans. “The exception made for the Germanized Jew,” explains George Mosse, “meant that a Volkish ideology could exist without a racist outlook that automatically barred Jews from membership in the youth organization or the nation.” (Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology*, 181) Anthroposophists at times adopted a more ambivalent attitude toward assimilation, warning against intermarriage between Jews and gentiles; see e.g. Pauli, *Blut und Geist*, 30, and Karutz, “Zur Frage von Rassebildung und Mischehe,” 99-102. Several further examples will be explored in detail in chapter 8.

threat to the purity of the *Volk*. This ‘redemptive antisemitism’ promised to heal the world and restore it to its proper balance and harmony by eradicating the Jewish aberration.¹⁰⁸

Anthroposophists were nevertheless 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 decadent characteristics of the “group-soul” and its ill-fated effects on European cultural life. This message was stated with particular force in a 1925 polemic against Zionism by the editor of *Anthroposophie*, who held Jews in general responsible for stubbornly refusing to accept their inevitable doom.¹⁰⁹ Jews who obstinately remained Jews constituted a hindrance to spiritual advancement, and the ongoing reverberations of Jewish impact on the German essence and the vestiges of Jewish background in the present posed a perilous challenge to the German mission. Friedrich Rittelmeyer thus urged his fellow anthroposophists in 1937 to work against “the repercussions of Judaism within Christianity.”¹¹⁰ Still, especially worthy Jewish individuals had the capacity to “lift

¹⁰⁸ 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 in German and Austrian contexts. The most basic form of this idea is that through ridding the world of the affliction of Jewishness, humanity can be returned to a harmonious wholeness, and war, economic exploitation, and political manipulation can be abolished, so that a genuinely free and hale society of honest producers can flourish and prosperity and peacefulness can reign among the peoples of the world.

¹⁰⁹ Kurt Piper, “Martin Buber und das Chaos” *Anthroposophie* February 22, 1925, 29-31. Piper wrote that modern Jews represented “die starre Unerbittlichkeit eines seit Jahrtausenden mumifizierten alttestamentlichen Gruppengeistes.” “Aber das Judentum wird heute täglich nervöser, auch geistig immer nervöser und aktiver; denn es fühlt sehr wohl, daß seine für die Weltlage unheilsschwere Rolle ausgespielt ist und das Blatt sich zu wenden beginnt. [...] das Judentum begräbt sich selbst als bestimmender Exponent der Zivilisation, der es viel zu lange gewesen ist. Zionismus und ähnliche Verstiegheiten, an die kein vernünftiger Mensch glaubt, sind nur als Ausgeburt eines perniziösen Fieberzustandes zu verstehen, der sich aus allen Kräften gegen die andringende Vernichtung sträubt, ohne sie aufhalten zu können.” (30) See also Ruth Pottlitzer, “Der ‘Ewige Jude’ in Mythos und Geschichte” *Die Drei: Monatschrift für Anthroposophie* February 1931, 704-07.

¹¹⁰ Rittelmeyer, “Über Christentum und Germanentum” *Die Christengemeinschaft* November 1937, 209: “Leugnet der Buddhist den Vater und der Muhammedaner den Geist, so leugnet der Jude immer und überall, soweit er eben Jude geblieben ist, den Sohn. Auch das Judentum, das heute im Christentum weiterlebt – und es lebt noch stark im Christentum der Gegenwart – steht wider den Sohn.” Anthroposophists must thus work against “die Nachwirkung des Judentums im Christentum” by

themselves out of the defects of their race.”¹¹¹ Even while holding out the possibility of assimilation into genuine Germanness and Christian salvation, Steiner’s followers stressed that Jews who were excessively attached to Jewish characteristics would be unable to achieve redemption, as another German anthroposophist argued in 1937.¹¹² Claims like these were echoed in harsher form in Karutz’s work as well.¹¹³ Similar arguments could be found in anthroposophist journals as late as 1943.¹¹⁴

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.” Karutz condemned “the cliquish, petty, narrow-minded spirit of Jewry, which is rigidly tied to the past, devoted to dead conceptual knowledge, and hungry for world power,” noting that this spirit could appear in anyone, not just in Jews themselves.¹¹⁵ A 1931 book on “the enigma of Jewry” by anthroposophist Ludwig

opposing “Materialismus, Intellektualismus, Egoismus.” For an extended presentation of these ideas see the 1934 disquisition “Juden und Deutsche” in Rittelmeyer, *Deutschtum*, 99-120.

¹¹¹ Rittelmeyer, *Deutschtum*, 120.

¹¹² Paul, *Krankheit und Heilung des Abendlandes*, 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 in Wahrheit und in der Tiefe seines Wesens jene Umwandlung, die Taufe durch Christus, zu vollziehen.”

¹¹³ Cf. Karutz, *Rassenfragen*, 38, on Jews seducing Germans toward materialism and on “Intellektuelle” as “jüdisch versippt,” and 74 on the Jews as a disappearing people, gradually dying out, with only those who cling to “Gruppenbewußtsein” remaining Jews. Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde*, 9. Lieferung, “Religion” (1931), 51, contends that Jews are inclined toward “ungebundenste Selbstsucht.” Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde*, 38. Lieferung, “Gesellschaftliches Leben” (1934), 6, blames “hebräischer” influence for materialism, atheism, Communism, and “den Parlamentarismus, den Intellekt, den kapitalistischen Merkantilismus” as well as related forms of “Zersetzung.” According to Karutz, “der westliche Intellektuelle, namentlich hebräischer Sippenbewußtseinsart und Gemeinschaftsbindung,” pursues his own “Machtwillen” and obstructs “die Ich-Entwicklung.”

¹¹⁴ See e.g. Ernst Uehli, “Kosmologische Betrachtungen” *Das Goetheanum* May 23, 1943, 165, which repeats the standard anthroposophist claim that Jews as a people do not have a fully developed ‘I’ but are instead “an die Blutsfolge gebunden” and that esoteric Christianity offers the possibility of transcending this anachronistic form.

¹¹⁵ Karutz, *Von Goethe zur Völkerkunde der Zukunft*, 57, declared that “Der Jude im Menschen ist der Feind” and condemned “den gruppengebundenen, engherzigen, vergangenheitsstarrten, totem Begriffswissen und totem Stoffe opfernden, weltmachthungrigen Geist des Judentums, der eben in jedem Menschen steckt.” This Jewish spirit “kältet wie der Mond” and “verhärtet, verhäßlicht, verkrampt durch Haß und Gier” (57).

Thieben spelled out this perspective in great detail.¹¹⁶ Thieben contrasted “the Semitic race” to “the Nordic-Germanic peoples,” emphasizing the “significant difference between the Aryan and the true Jew,” and decried the “manifold harmful influence of the Jewish essence” while describing modern Jewry as “the people which like no other resists Christianity, through the very nature of its blood.”¹¹⁷ He associated Jews with all of the purported evils of modernity: “The rationalism which pervades all of Jewry is intimately linked to the Jews’ basic heteronomous disposition. From here there is an essential internal connection to [...] modern natural science, to modern capitalist economic forms as well as to Communism and its materialist-intellectualistic ideas.”¹¹⁸ Other anthroposophists applauded Thieben’s book.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Ludwig Thieben, *Das Rätsel des Judentums* (Düsseldorf: Pflugschar-Verlag, 1931). The book was reprinted unabridged by the anthroposophical Perseus Verlag in Basel 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 WWI. He played a prominent role in the Viennese anthroposophical milieu and emigrated to Holland after the Anschluss. See also Ludwig Thieben, *Weltanschauung und soziales Leben* (Oedenburg: Röttig-Romwalter, 1933).

¹¹⁷ Thieben, *Das Rätsel des Judentums*, 202, 174, 164. Thieben shared the anthroposophical premise that the Jews’ mission was fulfilled two thousand years ago; Jewish existence since then had been an “enigma” and a “tragedy” because the Jews failed to recognize Christ and did not dissolve into the other peoples (126-27, 139). Alongside lengthy quotations from Steiner, Thieben’s book relies heavily on Werner Sombart’s *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* and Otto Weininger’s *Geschlecht und Charakter*. Of the latter Thieben writes: “Auch in bezug auf das Problem des Judentums kommt Weininger der Wahrheit so nahe wie kaum ein zweiter, doch fehlt ihm zur vollen Lösung die klare Einsicht in das historische und geistige Wesen des Christentums.” (200)

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 134. According to Thieben, “entwurzelter Intellektualismus ist in psychologischer Hinsicht fortan der Hauptwesenszug des nachchristlichen Judentums,” indeed this intellectualism, “nun vollends entwurzelt,” is the “Wesen des Judentums” (142). “Es ist nun durchaus verständlich, daß man in nichtjüdischen Kreisen die große Rolle, welche die Juden im Bank- und Börsenwesen, im Handel, in der modernen Wissenschaft, als Ärzte, Advokaten und Journalisten spielen, recht unsympathisch empfindet und daß man in dieser Hinsicht von einem ‘zersetzenden Einfluß des jüdischen Geistes’ spricht.” (173) He goes on to reject the proposals by antisemitic parties to combat this situation through coercive means, because such an approach does not address the spiritual roots of the problem; it fails to curb the “übelsten Elementen des Judentums” while making it harder for the “edleren Naturen” among the Jews to embrace Christianity. (175) Thieben then explains that the Jews themselves are primarily responsible for their persecution, and that the dissolution of the Jewish people is the only possible solution. (183)

¹¹⁹ Cf. Hans Erhard Lauer’s lengthy and very positive review in *Anthroposophie* July 5, 1931, 213-15; Lauer’s repeated praise for the book in *Ein Leben im Frühlicht des Geistes*, 54; and the enthusiastic endorsement in Gleich, *Die Menschwerdung des Weltenwortes*, 36. For Gleich’s own views see Hans Heinrich Frei, “Die Hebräische Geschichte in ihren Haupteinschnitten als Vorbereitung der Christus-Offenbarung” *Die Drei* June 1926, 208-22.

Near the end of the war, a 1944 pamphlet printed in Britain presented an anthroposophical analysis of the ‘Jewish question’ under the impact of the Nazi persecution of the Jews. Authored by émigré anthroposophist Norbert Glas, the text discussed the tragic “Karma of the Jewish race” and the sufferings of Jews at the hands of non-Jews, presenting Steiner’s esoteric version of Christianity as the solution to both.¹²⁰ Modern Jews, Glas explained, suffered from “soul-sickness” because of their refusal to recognize Christ as their salvation.¹²¹ Describing Jews as not only spiritually but physically different from non-Jews, Glas argued that Jews clung tenaciously to their outdated traditions and isolated themselves from the rest of humankind. Because of their cultivation of “hereditary forces” and concomitant “hardening of the body,” Jews were generally “less receptive to the spiritual.”¹²² Jews also represented “materialistic forces,” and this was the reason for much of “the hatred

¹²⁰ Norbert Glas, *The Jewish Question: A Problem of Mankind* (Sheffield: Sheffield Educational Settlement, 1944), quote on 6. 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.

¹²¹ The mission of the Jews, according to Glas, consisted of providing the physical vehicle for the incarnation of the Christ spirit: “The Jewish race had to prepare the physical body for the descending Sun-Being.” (Glas, *The Jewish Question*, 11) “This incarnation could only take place if a suitable body were formed which could serve as an instrument for the Divine Spirit. Such a body was evolved by the Jewish people.” (13) Honorable as it was, the Jewish mission was fulfilled two thousand years ago, and since then the Jews had failed to recognize that their time was past. “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) Glas lamented “the misapprehension by the Jews of the nature of Christ” (19), insisting that “Judaism had fulfilled its world-historic mission – but unfortunately had not understood it.” (22) He portrayed the Jews of the last two millennia as rigidly following obsolete rules and customs: “This strict adherence to the old law gave rise to all the soul-sickness to which Judaism has since been subject.” (22) Thus the Jews continued to follow their outmoded traditions even after “their mission had come to an end.” (28) Their “non-recognition” of Christ explains “the Ahasveric survival of the Jews.” (38)

¹²² Glas, *The Jewish Question*, 32. See also 35 on the peculiarities of “the physical organism of the Jew.” Modern Jews are characterized by an “excessive cultivation of their blood-relationship” (23), and this unfortunate attachment to “heredity” constitutes part of “the guilt of the Jewish people.” (24) “All the persecution to which the Jews have been subjected during the centuries have really been directed against Ahasverus. He is the symbol of the hardened forces of heredity, as well as of the man who sinned against Christ.” (24) Gentile hostility toward Jews is a reaction against this Jewish guilt: “How much the other nations turned against the guilt of Judaism can be seen by the intensity of persecutions at various times.” (25) But all Jews can be redeemed by embracing Christ.

which is directed against Judaism to-day.”¹²³ Even before the arrival of the Nazi regime, views such as these occasioned divisive internal debates among anthroposophists about the proper response to Jewish members within their ranks.¹²⁴

In both private and public utterances during the Nazi era, anthroposophists emphasized that the “Jewish spirit” must be “overcome” particularly in its three principal forms of intellectualism, materialism, and egoism, the chief illnesses of the modern world.¹²⁵ Steiner’s followers credited him with revealing “how deeply the Jewish spirit has penetrated into all the sciences.”¹²⁶ Biodynamic advocates blamed profit-oriented chemical agriculture on the Jews.¹²⁷ Anthroposophy’s anti-materialist

¹²³ Ibid., 34: Judaism “bore all the senile characteristics of the culture, which to-day, even though unconsciously, is responsible for all our troubles.”

¹²⁴ An exchange from 1931 captured the contrary positions involved. According to Stuttgart anthroposophist Hermann Weinberger, Jews always have the opportunity to become Christians, but those who decline to do so and instead remain Jewish represent an internal threat to the anthroposophical movement; their “zersetzenden Wirkungen” are corroding anthroposophy from within and impeding “die Aufgabe des Deutschtums.” Jewishness thus represented “Verrat am Deutschtum.” Weinberger charged the crypto-Jews in anthroposophical ranks with continuing their “Kreuzigungen” as they had done at Golgotha. He cited several passages from Steiner in support of his claims. Weinberger raised the same concerns at the January 1929 general assembly of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany. See Hermann Weinberger, “Erklärung,” March 20, 1931, BA R58/6193/1: 281-284. In contrast, anthroposophist C.S. Picht held that “diejenigen Juden, die Anthroposophen werden” were “besonders wertvoll” and claimed that in Steiner’s view, Jews who become anthroposophists “kann man eigentlich nicht mehr Juden nennen.” See C.S. Picht to Karl Heyer, April 22, 1931, BA R58/7408.

¹²⁵ See the unsigned article from the January 26, 1934 edition of the *Pforzheimer Rundschau* titled “Von Rudolf Steiners Lebensgang und Werk,” reprinted in *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* February 1934, 20-21, a very positive portrait of anthroposophy occasioned by lectures in Pforzheim by Karl Heyer and Jürgen von Grone. According to the article, Heyer focused on refuting the notion that Steiner was Jewish, pro-Jewish, or Jewish influenced, and explained that for anthroposophy the “jüdischer Geist” must be “überwunden,” especially as manifested in intellectualism, materialism, and egoism. Summarizing Heyer’s claims about Jewish opposition to Steiner during the Weimar era, the article reports: “Besonders die jüdische Presse hat ihn bekämpft.” (20) The summary of Grone’s lecture is similar, highlighting Steiner’s steadfast commitment to *Deutschtum* and depicting anthroposophy as the alternative to “westeuropäische-demokratisch-liberale” notions (21).

¹²⁶ Eingabe from Wulf Rabe, Potsdam, to Preussisches Staatsministerium, December 5, 1938, GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 108: 67, stating that Steiner “klarlegt, wie tief der jüdische Geist in alle Wissenschaften eingedrungen ist.”

¹²⁷ “Akten-Vermerk für Herrn Hanns Georg Müller” (BA R9349/3/M). The document is unsigned and undated, but the surrounding materials strongly suggest that the text was authored by Erhard Bartsch in December 1938. The document discusses the “Judenfrage” and how *Demeter* is addressing it, and blames all of the negative aspects of modern agriculture on “jüdischen Einflüssen.” Noting Julius Streicher’s agreement with the biodynamic stance opposing immunization, it claims that immunization campaigns are promoted by “der jüdischen Ärzteschaft” and constitute a form of “Verseuchung

stance sometimes won it praise from Nazi antisemites.¹²⁸ The allegedly problematic nature of Jewishness and its contrast with Germanness resurfaced again and again in anthroposophical literature.¹²⁹ Despite all this, however, Nazi opponents of occultism classified anthroposophist antisemitism as sympathetic to the Jews and an instance of the esoteric failure to acknowledge the primacy of race, and anthroposophists of Jewish origin had to flee Nazi Germany.¹³⁰ As with other ideological affinities between anthroposophy and Nazism, agreement on the dangers of Jewish influence did not necessarily lead to official acceptance.

This contradictory record contributed to the ambivalent experience of anthroposophists under the Third Reich. Unlike various neo-pagan groups, anthroposophy did not mount an organized effort to become the acknowledged spiritual complement to National Socialism, nor was it persecuted as insistently and violently as other small spiritual groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses. At times Steiner's movement received remarkably positive press coverage in the Nazi era,

gesunden Blutes." The document portrays *Demeter* as the antidote to such influences, countering the harmful effects of the Jews.

¹²⁸ The extremely positive review of Ehrenfried Pfeiffer's 1938 book *Die Fruchtbarkeit der Erde* by Armin Süßenguth in *Leib und Leben* September 1940, 93, proclaimed that the biodynamic movement stands "im Dienste der Vaterlandsliebe," adding: "Wir haben das Vertrauen zu der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise, daß sie mehr und mehr das ideale Ziel verwirklichen wird. Der ordinäre Materialismus gräbt sich das eigene Grab: Die Kuh ist keine Milchfabrik, das Huhn keine Eierlegemaschine, der Acker ist kein chemischer Kochkessel, wie die Judenprofessoren gerne wahr haben möchten." Cf. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, *Die Fruchtbarkeit der Erde, ihre Erhaltung und Erneuerung: Das biologisch-dynamische Prinzip in der Natur* (Basel: Zbinden & Hügin, 1938).

¹²⁹ Cf. Emil Bock's 1936 book *Das Alte Testament und die Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit*; Valentin Tomberg, *Anthroposophische Betrachtungen über das Alte Testament*, typescript dated Tallinn, November 1933, "Als Manuskript gedruckt. Nur für Mitglieder der Allgemeinen Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft." (a copy can be found in BA R58/6192: 173-315); Rittelmeyer's 1933 book *Rudolf Steiner als Führer zu neuem Christentum*, 83-85, juxtaposing "Germanentum" and "Judentum"; and Rittelmeyer's 1936 book *Christus*, 42, 47, 108-09, 137-39, contrasting "Semitic" and "Aryan" types. Anthroposophist texts displaying antisemitic tendencies, including several by Rittelmeyer, sometimes seem to have been meant as replies to and implicit critiques of Nazi rhetoric against Jews; these texts nonetheless remain beholden to antisemitic premises.

¹³⁰ Gestapostelle Düsseldorf to Gestapa Berlin, June 22, 1936, BA R58/6193/1: 326-334, portrays Hermann Weinberger as a sympathizer of Jewry and cites Weinberger's 1931 "Erklärung" and Thieben's *Rätsel des Judentums* as proof that "die Anthroposophie die rassistischen Unterschiede nicht anerkennt."

including outspokenly supportive pieces in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.¹³¹

Anthroposophist authors generally encountered few difficulties in publishing their work.¹³² But some anthroposophical literature was nonetheless placed on the list of unwanted and harmful publications, created in October 1935 but not made public.¹³³

SD specialists on occult groups made suppression of anthroposophist publications a priority, though they met with relatively little success.¹³⁴ The SD analysts argued that

¹³¹ See the article “Die Marneschlacht – ein Freimaurerverrat?” from the January 25, 1934 *Völkischer Beobachter*, rebutting anti-anthroposophist rumors regarding Steiner, Moltke, and the battle of the Marne, reprinted in *Mitteilungen für die Mitglieder der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland* June 1934, 5-6; “Deutsche Rechtlichkeit: Ein Vortrag im Goethe-Saal” *Völkischer Beobachter* January 24, 1934, a very positive report on a lecture by Roman Boos at the Munich Anthroposophical Society headquarters; Elisabeth Klein to Alfred Baeumler, December 18, 1937, proudly noting reviews of anthroposophist books in the *Völkischer Beobachter* (BA NS15/301: 58127). *Die Christengemeinschaft* quoted Nazi media fairly frequently and affirmatively, sometimes reprinting excerpts from the *Völkischer Beobachter*. The *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* April 1935, 22-23, reprinted a substantial article from the April 3, 1935 edition of the *Essener Allgemeine Zeitung*, titled “Tagung der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft Essen,” an extremely favorable account, with special attention to the presentations by Herbert Hahn and Sigismund von Gleich. *Das Goetheanum* June 18, 1933, 199, reprinted an article from the June 7, 1933 *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* titled “Rudolf Steiner und der kulturelle Erneuerungsgedanke” which began as follows: “Dem Ziel, Zusammenhänge der anthroposophischen Bewegung, der Lehre Rudolf Steiners, mit Kräften der kulturellen Erneuerungsarbeit aufzuzeigen, wie sie gegenwärtig in Deutschland am Werke sind, galt eine öffentliche Tagung der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft, die in diesen Tagen in Hamburg stattfand.”

¹³² The ample *Reichsschrifttumskammer* files on anthroposophist authors contain very few cases of denying permission to publish, or even of delays or obstacles. For a rare exception see BA RK/141: 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, in contrast, shows that she continued to publish after 1941, receiving explicit authorization from the *Reichsschrifttumskammer*, the Propaganda Ministry, and even the SD; see SD to *Reichsschrifttumskammer*, February 23, 1942 (BA RK/1280: 30). See also the full page advertisement for the Verlag der Christengemeinschaft in the *Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel* No. 254, November 1, 1935, p. 5234, advertising books by Rittelmeyer, Bock, Doldinger, Pauli, and Meyer’s *Weisheit der deutschen Volksmärchen*, among others.

¹³³ Cf. Jan-Pieter Barbian, *Literaturpolitik im Dritten Reich: Institutionen, Kompetenzen, Betätigungsfelder* (Frankfurt: Buchhändler-Vereinigung, 1993), 222-30, examining the “Liste des schädlichen und unerwünschten Schrifttums”; Barbian notes that the list included “Schriften national-konservativer Autoren, das Schrifttum der ‘Schwarzen Front’ Otto Strassers, sämtliche Schriften von und über Ernst Röhm, sogenanntes ‘Konjunkturschrifttum’ zu Nationalsozialismus und Rassenforschung, [...] nahezu die gesamte Literatur der Moderne [...] das Schrifttum der Bekennenden Kirche, Schriften zur Anthroposophie, zur Frauenemanzipation, zum Schwangerschaftsabbruch, zur Nacktkörperkultur sowie Aufklärungsliteratur zum Thema Sexualität.” (226)

¹³⁴ The March 3, 1936 SD memorandum for Wilhelm Spengler (BA R58/6186: 270), which may have been the origin of the May 1936 report “Die Anthroposophie,” relays an order from Heydrich to gather all material on anthroposophy and assemble it into an argument demonstrating that anthroposophy is even more dangerous to National Socialism than the mainstream churches. Wilhelm Spengler was head of the SD *Schriftumsstelle* in Leipzig, whose work emphasized that the various overt and covert enemies of Nazism often utilized and perverted terms like “Rasse” and “Volksgemeinschaft”; the SD’s

misuse of terms such as “Rasse, Volk, Gemeinschaft, Deutschtum” by non-Nazi authors, even if sincere and well-meaning, “must be regarded as an attack on the National Socialist worldview.”¹³⁵ They were especially wary of small 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.¹³⁶

Central components of the Nazi regime thus placed daunting limits on the potential for mutual recognition between anthroposophists and party or state representatives. Loudly as Steiner’s followers might denounce ‘intellectualism,’ many Nazis viewed anthroposophists themselves as intellectuals. A number of Nazi officials, moreover, both committed opponents in the SD or Gestapo as well as more nuanced observers like Baeumler, firmly rejected anthroposophical ideas about race and nation. But National Socialist race ideology itself operated simultaneously in very different registers, conjoining instrumental rationality with deeply irrational elements; this charged context created a porous but troubled boundary between Nazi and occult variants of racial thought. For other Nazis, however, anthroposophy still had much to

task was to vigilantly combat such subversions of the National Socialist ideal. For context see Barbian, *Literaturpolitik im Dritten Reich*, 110-14. See also the February 1939 SD file titled “Freigegebene anthrop. Schriften” in BA R58/6192. By 1939 the SD was complaining about the “Wiederzulassung fast des gesamten Steinerschen Schrifttums” (BA R58/6193/1: 198).

¹³⁵ June 1936 SD Sonderbericht “Zersetzung der nationalsozialistischen Grundwerte im deutschsprachigen Schrifttum seit 1933” (BA R58/5959: 267-353), 268. Heinz Boberach, ed., *Berichte des SD und der Gestapo über Kirchen und Kirchengemeinden in Deutschland 1934-1944* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1971), 195-223, reproduces an abridged version of the document, which was prepared by the Leipzig *Schrifttumsstelle*.

¹³⁶ For examples see the section titled “Verfälschung der nationalsozialistischen Rassenidee durch Theosophen, Astrologen, Mazdaznan-Anhänger und sonstige Wunderapostel” in *Zersetzung der nationalsozialistischen Grundwerte im deutschsprachigen Schrifttum seit 1933*, BA R58/5959: 312-14. Tellingly, the SD analysts criticized “materialist misinterpretations” of Nazi racial theory, arguing that the National Socialist conception of race united the biological with the spiritual, the physical with the soul, into one comprehensive synthesis. For an extended critique of occult racial theories, focused on theosophy, ariosophy, and Mazdaznan, without mention of anthroposophy, see G. Meyer-Heydenhagen, “Verfälschung des Rassegedankens durch Geheimlehren” *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* September 1935, 770-78. For a more general critique of occultism as “eine Gefahr für die Volksgesundheit” see Wilhelm Weygandt, “Der Okkultismus, seine Grundlagen und Gefahren” *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie* December 1939, 453-96.

offer in the effort to revive and renew the German nation. While state and party agencies sometimes co-opted or selectively appropriated anthroposophist initiatives and sometimes re-structured or re-named these initiatives to reduce their apparent occult character, influential Nazis also provided less equivocal support to anthroposophical projects. The crossover between Steiner's teachings and National Socialism did not go unnoticed among sympathetic observers.

Previous scholarship has tended to reduce this convoluted situation to one of two mutually incompatible but equally simplified scenarios: either occultists and Nazis were aligned with one another at a fundamental level, or the hostilities between them drove both sides to revile each other. More nuanced recent treatments have inclined toward the latter interpretation, characterizing the central dynamic of Nazi-occult relations as one of “escalating hostility.” Corinna Treitel concludes that “although there were certain cultural affinities between occultism and Nazism, these affinities never translated into a sociopolitical alliance of occultists with the state.”¹³⁷ Whether they qualify as ‘alliances’ or not, the incidents of cooperation between Nazis and anthroposophists – in the field of health care or agriculture or education or elsewhere – were extensive and of notably long duration, and gave concrete institutional expression to the cultural affinities linking the two worldviews. But these very same affinities simultaneously generated intense antagonism toward anthroposophy and other occult organizations on the part of some Nazi agencies. In the intricate choreography of attraction and repulsion that marked anthroposophist interactions with Nazism, theory and practice were at odds as often as they were in accord.

The promise of German national renewal as a path to healing the world attracted both politically oriented Nazis and spiritually oriented esotericists; much of

¹³⁷ Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, 211.

what made Nazism appealing, and allowed the regime to draw in anthroposophists and others like them, was the hope of communal rebirth and spiritual regeneration. The resulting exchanges were complicated by parallel and partially overlapping theories of racial evolution and racial destiny. Anthroposophist dealings with the Nazi government featured both a tendency toward affinity and a tendency toward hostility, and the two tendencies formed intertwined moments: the moment of convergence between esoteric and National Socialist ideas, and the moment of equally intense conflict between the two, constantly interacting with and against one another. This ambiguous legacy notwithstanding, the degree of ideological correspondence and the scope of shared assumptions created a resilient bond connecting Steiner's professedly apolitical movement to elements of the Nazi state across a variety of contexts. Even though this bond did not endure the twelve years of the Third Reich, it reflected a decisive aspect of the historically unresolved relationship between occultism and fascism.

Chapter 5

Education for the National Community?

The Controversy over Waldorf Schools in the Third Reich

On the 31st of January 1933, just a day after the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany, the mother of a pupil at the Breslau Waldorf school removed her daughter from the school. The mother, a Nazi party member, was upset by the temporary presence in the school of an assistant teacher from a Jewish background, and expressed her strong disagreement with the Waldorf faculty regarding “the race question.” The daughter’s regular teacher, Heinrich Wollborn, wrote a letter to the mother 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.¹

Wollborn’s forthright 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 *Volk* and its highest spiritual expression, namely anthroposophy itself. Wollborn’s stance flatly contradicted Nazi racial doctrine, and in the subsequent months the Breslau Waldorf school faced fierce criticism from zealous opponents in the local Nazi party organization; one anonymous denunciation declared that “Jews are behind this school.”²

Beneath the rhetoric lay a remarkably complicated reality. The visiting teacher whose presence had sparked the incident, an anthroposophist named Ernst Lehrs, came

¹ Heinrich Wollborn to Frau Dr. Oberstein, Breslau, January 31, 1933 (BA NS 15/301: 58191).

² See the 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).

from a family whose Jewish roots were notably tenuous.³ Not only was Lehrs himself fervently committed to Steiner's esoteric version of Christianity, both his parents and his grandparents had belonged to the Protestant church.⁴ The family had not been Jewish for generations, except in the 'racial' sense, and indeed 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 thus 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 Heinrich Wollborn and the administration of the Breslau Waldorf school soon distanced themselves from the comparatively tolerant stance they had initially expressed. Writing to the 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."⁵

³ Lehrs, 38 years old at the time of the Breslau incident, was a founding faculty member at the original Waldorf school in Stuttgart and had been an anthroposophist since 1920.

⁴ Schulrat Jakob, Breslau, to NSLB, October 18, 1933 (BA NS 15/301: 58197). A year later, in February 1934, Lehrs 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 fighting for Germany on the front lines in WWI and quoting Hitler in support of his claim; Lehrs to administration of Stuttgart Waldorf school, February 11, 1934, quoted in Wenzel Götte, "Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie: Das Beispiel der Freien Waldorfschulen" (dissertation, University of Bielefeld, Fakultät für Pädagogik, 2001), 455-56.

⁵ Wollborn to Breslau municipal school district, October 14, 1933 (BA NS 15/301: 58193). The letter emphasizes that he stood up for Lehrs at the time of the January incident primarily out of "collegial duty."

The Breslau Waldorf school, meanwhile, now accepted the distinction between ‘Jews’ and ‘Aryans’ and explained that Jews no longer worked there, stressing that Lehrs had been only a temporary employee who left the school before the new laws regarding Jewish employees were promulgated.⁶ The school further noted that many Waldorf teachers had joined the Nazi teachers association and that the Waldorf schools themselves had completed the process of *Gleichschaltung*, the Nazi term for bringing social institutions into line with the regime.⁷ A local school inspector was assigned to investigate the incident, and completely absolved both Wollborn and the school. The inspector’s 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.⁸

This episode from the very beginning of the Nazi era reveals much about the developing attitude of the Waldorf movement toward the Nazi regime, and illustrates the contending perspectives on the boundaries of the *Volk* and the complicated dynamics involved in the Waldorf movement’s efforts to establish its standing within a changed political environment. While the basic history of Waldorf schooling in the Third Reich has been traced before, the available interpretations have not adequately explored its implications for the broader history of the relationship between

⁶ Freie Waldorfschule Breslau to Breslau municipal school district, October 15, 1933 (BA NS 15/301: 58195).

⁷ Ibid: “Alle Waldorfschulen des Reiches sind im Bund der Waldorfschulen zusammengeschlossen und haben als solcher die Gleichschaltung vollzogen.” For background on the process of *Gleichschaltung* in the educational sector see Rolf Eilers, *Die nationalsozialistische Schulpolitik: Eine Studie zur Funktion der Erziehung im totalitären Staat* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1963), 66-85.

⁸ Schulrat Jakob, Breslau, to NSLB, October 18, 1933 (BA NS 15/301: 58197). Jakob’s report does not identify any of the Breslau Waldorf teachers who were Nazi party members. According to other sources, one of them was Werner May, teacher of religion and language at the Breslau Waldorf school from 1931 to 1935. In addition to his Nazi party membership, May was a prolific author of *völkisch* literature for young readers, including a book entitled *Adolf Hitler* that sold several hundred thousand copies. See BA R4901/2519: 70, 102; as well as May’s *Reichsschrifttumskammer* file, BA RK/RSK I B127: 77-230. Another teacher at the Breslau Waldorf school in 1934, Wilhelm Beck, was an SA member (BA R4901/2519: 69). By 1935, the acting director of the Breslau Waldorf school was a Nazi party member and an SA officer: Stapo Breslau to Gestapa Berlin, November 22, 1935 (BA R58/6220a: 59), and Heydrich to Rust, March 3, 1936 (BA R4901/2519: 295).

anthroposophy and National Socialism, much less its relevance to the interaction between Nazism and occultism, on the one hand, and alternative lifestyle reform movements on the other.⁹ Focusing on previously neglected sources, my analysis will examine the conflicts surrounding Waldorf education between 1933 and 1941 as a case study of the controversy between anthroposophists and National Socialists over the proper meaning of race and nation in the ‘new Germany.’

Viewed from this perspective, as a microcosm of the broader relationships between anthroposophy and Nazism, the complicated struggle over Waldorf education from 1933 onward can perhaps best be understood as a series of conflicts about the true nature of the *Volksgemeinschaft* or 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 sometimes mutually incompatible interpretations.¹⁰ Anthroposophical treatments generally portray the Waldorf movement as adopting a purely defensive posture

⁹ 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. Leschinsky’s article provoked a remarkably defensive reaction within Waldorf circles; see Stefan Leber and Manfred Leist, “Notwendige Bemerkungen zum Beitrag ‘Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus’” *Neue Sammlung* 24 (1984), 79-90, as well as Leschinsky’s reply “‘Notwendige Bemerkungen’, aber falsche Gewißheiten” *Neue Sammlung* 24 (1984), 91-96. See also Stefan Leber and Manfred Leist, “Waldorfschule im ‘Dritten Reich’” *Erziehungskunst* June 1983, 341-51, and July 1983, 409-18. For a more recent anthroposophical apologia see Detlef Hardorp, “Die deutsche Waldorfschulbewegung in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus” in Inge Hansen-Schaberg, ed., *Waldorf-Pädagogik* (Baltmannsweiler: Schneider, 2002), 132-41. While such sources are of limited value as historical accounts, they are important testimony to the state of internal anthroposophical discussion about the Nazi past.

¹⁰ In addition to the independent analysis by Leschinsky, two anthroposophical works, Uwe Werner’s book and Wenzel Götte’s dissertation, provide substantial information based on extensive documentary research. While their conclusions are inevitably tendentious, these texts do offer a significant cross-section of evidence from anthroposophical archives, and thus form an important complement to the research assembled in this chapter. Götte’s study is in many respects the most sophisticated and most thoughtful of the existing anthroposophical accounts; it nonetheless remains beholden to apologetic premises. For crucial historical context on the Waldorf movement as a whole see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1357-1454.

toward Nazism, viewing the rise of National Socialism merely as a threat to be parried as effectively as possible, and obstinately resistant to *Gleichschaltung* and other accommodations to the new regime.¹¹ Pro-Nazi sympathies on the part of Waldorf advocates, when these are mentioned at all, are typically relegated to a marginal position within the Waldorf milieu as a whole, while Nazi officials are depicted as almost uniformly hostile to Waldorf from the beginning, leading inexorably to the final suppression of German Waldorf schools in 1941. In the more simplistic versions of this narrative, the Waldorf movement was merely a victim of Nazi persecution, and nothing more. The following reconstruction of the history of Waldorf education in Germany between 1933 and 1941 demonstrates that a more complex interpretation is called for.¹²

In comparison to other alternative educational projects, Waldorf schools initially fared relatively well under the Nazi regime.¹³ They were nonetheless the object of an intense and multifaceted struggle. The specific contours of the extended controversy over Waldorf schools in Nazi Germany reflected the fault lines running

¹¹ A further representative anthroposophical account is Norbert Deuchert, “Zur Geschichte der Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus” *Flensburger Hefte Sonderheft 8* (1991), 95-108, and Norbert Deuchert, “Der Kampf um die Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus” *Flensburger Hefte Sonderheft 8* (1991), 109-30. As with other anthroposophical treatments, Deuchert’s presentation of evidence is occasionally misleading and has had a distorting effect on subsequent scholarship in some cases. Ida Oberman, *The Waldorf Movement in Education from European Cradle to American Crucible, 1919-2008* (Lewiston: Mellen, 2008) appeared after this chapter was completed; I plan to incorporate it in a subsequent publication. Oberman’s book is one of the more thoughtful and historically informed treatments from within the Waldorf movement. Though her account contains several important errors and is presented in an apologetic framework, it provides the best anthroposophist overview available in English; see in particular part II, “Under the Shadow of National Socialism” (72-171). While noting the various affinities between Nazism and the Waldorf movement, she nonetheless concludes that “Nazi ideology was clearly opposite to Waldorf.” (76) This conclusion is contradicted by the evidence examined in this chapter.

¹² Several of the anthroposophical treatments cited above offer a more detailed account of the intricate negotiations between various Waldorf representatives and Nazi authorities. A selection of relevant documents is available in Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. II.

¹³ Ullrich, *Rudolf Steiner*, 155 observes: “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.”

through the anthroposophical movement as a whole regarding National Socialism as a potential vehicle for spiritual renewal, as well as the conflicting perspectives within the Nazi apparatus regarding anthroposophy and other occult sub-cultures. These tensions help explain the contradictory evidence about the extent to which the Waldorf movement participated in *Gleichschaltung* from an early stage, the willingness of various Waldorf representatives to make arrangements with the Nazi regime, and the degree of practical and ideological compatibility between anthroposophist pedagogy and the needs and demands of the Nazi state as well as of the German ‘national community’ itself.

Waldorf schools had been the primary public face of anthroposophy since their emergence in the wake of World War I. Founded in Stuttgart in 1919 under Steiner’s direction, the Waldorf movement expanded quickly within Germany and abroad. In the course of the 1920s Waldorf schools were established in London, The Hague, Oslo, New York, Basel, Zurich, Vienna, and Budapest.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ With its spiritually-based pedagogy and esoteric worldview, Waldorf thus formed a small but prominent part of the relatively limited private educational sector in Germany as the Weimar republic gave way to the National

¹⁴ See Ernst Uehli, “Denkschrift der Freien Waldorfschule” *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 356; Helmut Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1380; and Württembergisches Politisches Landespolizeiamt, Stuttgart, to Gestapa Berlin, September 11, 1934 (BA R58/6188/1: 306). The original school in Stuttgart was founded by the anthroposophist entrepreneur Emil Molt.

¹⁵ 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 again in 1925. On the Essen Waldorf school see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1380; Leschinsky, “Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus,” 256; René Maikowski, *Schicksalswege auf der Suche nach dem lebendigen Geist* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1980), 115-22; Württembergisches Politisches Landespolizeiamt, Stuttgart, to Gestapa Berlin, September 11, 1934 (BA R58/6188/1: 306); Gestapostelle Düsseldorf to Gestapa Berlin, June 22, 1936 (BA R58/6193/1: 327); as well as BA R58/6188/1: 209. On the total of nine schools in 1933 see Klein, *Begegnungen*, 84, 142.

Socialist regime.¹⁶ The schools combined elements which were simultaneously congruent with and in tension with Nazi principles. Waldorf advocates emphasized the anti-intellectual nature of anthroposophical pedagogy, an orientation bound to appeal to Nazi officials.¹⁷ At the same time, Steiner highlighted the religious character of Waldorf education, a significant source of contention for many Nazis.¹⁸

Soon after the establishment of the Nazi government, the German Waldorf schools banded together in the “Bund der Waldorfschulen” or League of Waldorf Schools in order to represent their interests in negotiations with educational and state

¹⁶ On the esoteric underpinnings of Waldorf education see Heiner Ullrich, “Erziehung als Kult” *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Pädagogik* 65 (1989), 151-78; Ullrich, *Waldorfpädagogik und okkulte Weltanschauung* (Munich: Juventa, 1991); Ludger Kowal-Summek, *Die Pädagogik Rudolf Steiners im Spiegel der Kritik* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1993); Klaus Prange, *Erziehung zur Anthroposophie: Darstellung und Kritik der Waldorfpädagogik* (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2000); Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, “Reformpädagogik in der Gegenwart” in Buchholz, ed., *Die Lebensreform*, 561-64; Siegfried Oppolzer, “Anthropologie und Pädagogik bei Rudolf Steiner” *Paedagogica Historica* 2 (1962), 287-350. For concise historical accounts see Heiner Ullrich, “Freie Waldorfschulen” in Kerbs and Reulecke, eds., *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen*, 411-24; Ullrich, “Rudolf Steiner und die Waldorfschule” in Michael Seyfarth-Stubenrauch and Ehrenhard Skiera, eds., *Reformpädagogik und Schulreform in Europa* (Baltmannsweiler: Schneider, 1996), 253-67; Wolfgang Scheibe, *Die Reformpädagogische Bewegung 1900-1932* (Weinheim: Beltz, 1978), 300-07. Historically reliable information in English is rare; the most thorough study available in translation is Ullrich, *Rudolf Steiner*. For a notably sympathetic portrait based entirely on English-language sources see Bruce Uhrmacher, “Uncommon Schooling: A Historical Look at Rudolf Steiner, Anthroposophy, and Waldorf Education” *Curriculum Inquiry* 25 (1995), 381-406; Uhrmacher’s article contains several inaccuracies. For context see Eckhardt Fuchs, “Nature and *Bildung*: Pedagogical Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century Germany” in Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal, eds., *The Moral Authority of Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 155-81, and Meike Sophia Baader, *Erziehung als Erlösung: Transformationen des Religiösen in der Reformpädagogik* (Weinheim: Juventa, 2005), particularly 80-85.

¹⁷ For an overview of Nazi campaigns against intellectualism in education see Richard Evans’ chapter “Struggle Against the Intellect” in Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 291-320.

¹⁸ On April 18, 1923, for example, Steiner explained to the original Waldorf teachers: “[W]e must work into the depths of the students’ souls through what is revealed to our individual insights. In this way we prepare them to grow into religious adults. We impede this process if we do not offer our students the possibility to find their own religious orientation later on. In every human being there is an individual orientation toward religion, which, after the fifteenth year, has to be gradually won. Our task is to prepare the ground so that this can happen properly. That is why, at this age, we have to treat the religion lessons just as we do the lessons in the other subjects. They must all work on the child’s soul through the power of imagery; the child’s soul life has to be stimulated. It is possible to introduce a religious element into every subject, even into math lessons. Anyone who has some knowledge of Waldorf teaching will know that this statement is true. A Christian element pervades every subject, even mathematics. This fundamental religious current flows through all of education.” Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness as the Basis of Pedagogical Practice* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1996), 93-94.

authorities at various levels.¹⁹ A spring 1933 submission to Nazi officials written by Ernst Uehli, carrying the title “Memorandum from the Free Waldorf School” and speaking on behalf of the Waldorf movement generally, employed the term *Gleichschaltung* to emphasize the schools’ loyalty to the new state:

All of the [Waldorf] 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.²⁰

This direct reference to *Gleichschaltung* may have been an instance of tactical maneuvering or merely opportunistic rhetoric. The same memorandum was published in the June 1933 issue of the Waldorf movement’s journal, *Erziehungskunst*. The published version, however, replaced the reference to *Gleichschaltung* with a euphemism, while still boasting of Waldorf teachers’ comprehensive membership in the Nazi teachers association.²¹ The memorandum further emphasized Waldorf education’s commitment to “the German cultural mission” and firmly distanced Waldorf from “international pedagogical reform tendencies” while repeatedly invoking Waldorf’s deep roots within the German *Volk*.²² Such claims were frequently

¹⁹ The “Reichsverband der Rudolf Steiner-Schulen” was founded in May 1933 and soon changed its name to “Bund der Waldorfschulen.” The Essen Waldorf school evidently was not included.

²⁰ “Alle die genannten Schulen in Deutschland sind heute im Reichsverband der Rudolf Steiner-Schulen zusammengeschlossen und korporativ dem nationalsozialistischen Lehrerverband gleichgeschaltet.” (Ernst Uehli, “Denkschrift der Freien Waldorfschule” BA R58/6220b: 2-32; quote on 18.) The 31 page document is undated but was written in May or June 1933, and is signed by Uehli “on behalf of the faculty of the Free Waldorf School.” 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.

²¹ Ernst Uehli, “Denkschrift” *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 345-72; here the passage reads “angemeldet” instead of “gleichgeschaltet” (357). The two versions of the text are otherwise virtually identical. 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.

²² Uehli, “Denkschrift” *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 348, 353, 364, 368, etc. On Waldorf education in the context of international pedagogical reform movements see Heiner 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. For an early very positive appreciation of the original Waldorf school by a major *völkisch* educational theorist, see Philipp Hördt, “Die Waldorfschule” *Die Tat* February 1921, 872-75.

echoed in *Erziehungskunst* throughout the 1933-36 period. If broad agreement on 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 anthroposophists and Waldorf advocates who were also active in the Nazi movement. This grouping included among others Eugen Link, Margarete Link, Leo Tölke, Hermann Mahle, Els Moll, and Hans Pohlmann. The openly pro-Nazi faction within the Waldorf camp had extensive roots within the anthroposophical movement, and for a time played a substantial role in shaping and representing Waldorf education. Eugen and Margarete Link, a longtime anthroposophist couple and parents of four Waldorf pupils, had known Steiner personally and belonged to the Anthroposophical Society from 1924 onward.²³ 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 various Nazi connections.²⁴ Both were party members and served on influential Waldorf boards and committees. Leo Tölke, father of four Waldorf pupils, was secretary of the Stuttgart Waldorf school and worked for the publishing arm of the Waldorf movement. He was a member of the Anthroposophical Society until mid-1934, held a position in the SA, and has been described as a “dedicated National Socialist.”²⁵ Another Waldorf parent, industrialist Hermann Mahle, was a prominent Waldorf official and belonged to the Christian Community.

²³ Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 120.

²⁴ 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: 203-215).

²⁵ Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 118. Cf. the January 9, 1934 “Bericht über den Besuch des Sekretärs Leo Tölke von der Waldorfschule” by Stuttgart municipal official Fritz Cuhorst (BA R4901/2519: 183-184), which contradicts Werner’s account on several points. According to this document, Tölke cast Waldorf teacher Ernst Bindel as his ally in efforts to bring the Stuttgart Waldorf school closer to the Nazi state. See also SD-Oberabschnitt Süd-West, “Bericht über die Freie Waldorfschule Stuttgart” January 29, 1934 (BA R58/6220b: 53).

Mahle was also a Nazi party member, and one of the leading Waldorf representatives in negotiations with various party and state agencies in 1934 and 1935.²⁶ Mahle additionally headed the “National Socialist Parents Group” at the Stuttgart Waldorf school, which included 53 party members and 22 members of other Nazi organizations.²⁷ Els Moll, member of the Anthroposophical Society since 1925, was among the most outspoken advocates for a synthesis of Waldorf education and Nazism during her time as a teacher at the Stuttgart school in 1933 and 1934.²⁸

Perhaps the most noteworthy member of the openly pro-Nazi Waldorf faction was Hans Pohlmann, a wealthy building contractor and longstanding anthroposophist who had known Steiner personally. Pohlmann founded the second Waldorf school in Germany, in Hamburg-Wandsbek, in 1922. With the exception of the failed schools in Cologne and Essen, the Wandsbek school was the only other German Waldorf program established during Steiner’s lifetime, and its initial faculty and curriculum were overseen by Steiner directly. Pohlmann’s role thus paralleled that of Emil Molt at the Stuttgart school.²⁹ In 1933 the Wandsbek school was the second largest in Germany, after the original Stuttgart school.³⁰ Pohlmann, who also headed a branch of the Anthroposophical Society in Hamburg, remained chairman of the local Waldorf

²⁶ On Mahle’s Nazi party membership see Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 134, and Deuchert, “Zur Geschichte der Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus,” 98.

²⁷ Deuchert, “Zur Geschichte der Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus,” 98.

²⁸ On Moll see Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 117-29; Werner portrays her as thoroughly at odds with the other Waldorf teachers and staff during her relatively brief tenure at the Stuttgart school. For an example of Moll’s ongoing efforts to promote Waldorf education well after parting ways with the Stuttgart school, see the May 10, 1935 “Bericht über den Besuch der Frau Moll” by a school inspector in Stuttgart (BA R4901/2519: 156-159); the inspector notes that Moll described herself as both an “anthroposophist” and a “convinced National Socialist.” Another version of the same document is available in Wagner, *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung* vol. II, 48-50. See also the February and March 1937 texts by Moll in BA R4901/2520: 123-128. 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).

²⁹ For basic background on Pohlmann see Götte, “Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie,” 299-302. The existing literature does not mention his Nazi party membership.

³⁰ Uehli, “Denkschrift der Freien Waldorfschule” *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 356.

school association throughout the Wandsbek school's first seventeen years of existence.³¹ He joined the Nazi party some time before 1934.³²

By 1936 the radically pro-Nazi Waldorf tendency had effectively lost the internal struggle to their more moderate colleagues, as compromise prevailed over collaboration. The two wings of the movement were marked by agreements as well as disagreements. While the Nazi-affiliated Waldorf advocates did not all share the same vision for how to integrate Waldorf education into the National Socialist project, they did consider anthroposophy and Waldorf compatible with and congruent with Nazi ideals. Their efforts were only partly in line with those of the larger competing faction within the Waldorf movement, which generally looked askance at Nazi excesses but was willing to cooperate with Nazi officials in order to maintain Waldorf schools within the new Germany.³³ This second tendency comprised most of the major figures within the Waldorf movement in the 1930s, including Emil Molt, Ernst Uehli, Caroline von Heydebrand, Ernst August Karl Stockmeyer, Paul Baumann, Erich Schwebsch, Emil Kühn, René Maikowski, and Elisabeth Klein.³⁴ Maikowski (1900-1992), a prominent anthroposophist who had worked closely with Steiner in the early 1920s, was the leader of the League of Waldorf Schools and chief spokesperson for

³¹ See e.g. BA R58/7411.

³² 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). For an example of Pohlmann's correspondence with the Nazi Ministry of Education in 1936 see BA R4901/2520: 8-20.

³³ As a result of these internal rivalries, several of 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 anthroposophy; consequently, their statements about other anthroposophists were sometimes highly critical. This did not entail a rejection of the Waldorf project; see e.g. Margarete Link's July 3, 1936 letter to the Minister of Education, BA R4901/2519: 361-62.

³⁴ Heydebrand (1886-1938) and Stockmeyer (1886-1963) were two of the core founders of the original Waldorf school and two of the primary authors of the original Waldorf curriculum; Heydebrand also edited the Waldorf movement's journal, *Erziehungskunst*. Baumann (1887-1964) oversaw the introduction of music teaching at the original Waldorf school from 1919 onward, participated centrally in early meetings with Nazi officials, and by the beginning of 1934 had been named director of the Stuttgart school; see Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 105-07.

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, 1933.³⁵ His principal colleague in negotiations with Nazi authorities was Elisabeth Klein (1901-1983), who had also been a personal student of Steiner’s and who founded the Dresden Waldorf school in 1929 and led it until its closure in 1941.³⁶

In contrast to the openly pro-Nazi wing of the Waldorf movement, the Waldorf mainstream generally tried to make concessions to Nazi officials only to the extent necessary to ensure the survival of their own schools.³⁷ This process involved much more than simple harassment by the Nazis and evasive maneuvers by the Waldorf movement. There was a wide range of Nazi responses to Waldorf, and the aspirations and expectations of the Waldorf leadership itself shifted over time. For along with negotiating the future of the individual schools, many Waldorf advocates viewed the Nazi era as an opportunity, a positive opening, a chance for anthroposophical pedagogy to come into its own: Waldorf was to become the form of education appropriate to the German *Volk* in Germany’s newly revived status under Hitler’s leadership.

³⁵ On Hans Eberhard Maikowski see René Maikowski, *Schicksalswege auf der Suche nach dem lebendigen Geist*, 95-97, 140-41. Hans Eberhard Maikowski attended the Stuttgart Waldorf school for several years as a teenager, and according to his brother he continued to hold Waldorf, Steiner and anthroposophy in high esteem after joining the Nazi movement. See also the substantial file on Hans Eberhard Maikowski: BA NS 26/323. René Maikowski frequently invoked his late brother in meetings and correspondence with Nazi officials. Such connections were not uncommon in Waldorf circles; Helene Rommel, sister of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, was one of the founding teachers at the Stuttgart Waldorf school and worked devotedly for the Waldorf movement throughout her life.

³⁶ Klein, *Begegnungen*, 65-99.

³⁷ There were significant divisions within the mainstream Waldorf faction as well, which are explored extensively in the secondary literature; ex post facto anthroposophical accounts often view Maikowski and Klein, for example, as excessively willing to compromise with Nazi demands. A number of other important Waldorf figures, such as Eugen Kolisko or Ernst Weißert, appear to have taken a more consistently oppositional stance toward the regime. On the attitudes of Jewish Waldorf teachers who were forced to leave the schools in the early years of the Nazi era, see the excerpts from Hans Büchenbacher’s memoirs in *Info3* April 1999, 16-19. Büchenbacher is highly critical of several of his gentile anthroposophist colleagues. Cf. Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 249.

Such hopes found expression in Waldorf literature throughout the Nazi period. 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.”³⁸ The notice declared that all teachers in the new Germany should “contribute to building a new education based on the German spirit” and boasted that Waldorf schools have 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.”³⁹ Since Waldorf schools had shown how a true German education can be achieved, they were eager to share this experience with other educators in the present “struggle of German teachers to find new paths” in pedagogy.⁴⁰ Similar sentiments appeared in a newsletter sent by the Kassel Waldorf school to parents and supporters in March 1934, announcing a public conference to be held that month in order 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.”⁴¹ The newsletter continued: “Since their founding, Waldorf schools

³⁸ “Aus der Schulbewegung” *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 383-84, announcing the upcoming “Beiträge zur Überwindung von Intellektualismus und Materialismus in Erziehung und Unterricht,” including public presentations by Heydebrand, Uehli, Stockmeyer, and others. Such courses continued for years; the Stuttgart Waldorf school held a series of “Kurse zur Einführung in die Pädagogik Rudolf Steiners” in summer 1935, with another series of courses set to begin in October 1935; see *Erziehungskunst* August 1935, 134-35.

³⁹ Corresponding statements can be found throughout Waldorf publications at this time; see for example Caroline von Heydebrand, “Wege der Überwindung der materialistischen Weltanschauung durch die Menschenkunde Rudolf Steiners” *Erziehungskunst* December 1933, 493-98, which depicts Waldorf teachers as “warriors against the dragon of materialism” (498) and a bulwark against both intellectualism and materialism, which come from the West; Heydebrand here as elsewhere strongly emphasizes the Germanness of Waldorf pedagogy.

⁴⁰ “Aus der Schulbewegung” *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 384.

⁴¹ Letter from faculty of Kassel Waldorf school and the Verein Freie Waldorfschule Kassel to parents and friends of the school, March 2, 1934 (BA R58/6220c: 48). The public conference included presentations by Wolfgang Rudolph, teacher at the Kassel Waldorf school, on “Overcoming intellectualism and materialism through Rudolf Steiner’s art of education” as well as René Maikowski on “Educating toward the German character through Rudolf Steiner’s pedagogy” (“Erziehung zum deutschen Menschen durch die Pädagogik Rudolf Steiners”). For background on this slogan see Ciupke, Heuer, Jelich and Ulbricht, eds., “*Die Erziehung zum deutschen Menschen*”.

have fought for an educational art drawn from the wellsprings of the German *Volk*, and fought against Western intellectualism and Eastern Bolshevism.” Further statements of this sort indicate a vision of Waldorf education as a potential complement to the rebirth and renewal of Germany heralded by Nazism.⁴²

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 Nazi Ministry of Education in 1935 to work toward the eventual dismantling of all private schools, the leader of the League of Waldorf Schools, René Maikowski, wrote to the Ministry requesting that Waldorf schools be exempted from this regulation. 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 was “urgently needed for the national strengthening of our growing youth.” Referring contemptuously to the Weimar era as “Marxist,” Maikowski emphasized that the “new Germany” under National Socialist auspices presented the long-awaited opportunity for Waldorf to unfold its true potential. Whereas the success of the Waldorf schools in their effort toward national fortification had been “made extremely difficult by the narrow bureaucratic handling of the matter in Marxist Germany,” Maikowski wrote, “I would like to express the hope and the expectation that in the new Germany, genuine life will at last be able to blossom and that the pedagogical labor of the Waldorf schools will find sympathy and encouragement.”⁴³

⁴² For additional examples of such claims see the January 1934 newsletter of the Kassel Waldorf school, which calls 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); as well as René Maikowski’s February 15, 1934 letter to Adolf Hitler, in Wagner, *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung* vol. II, 14-16.

⁴³ League of Waldorf Schools to Ministry of Education, March 9, 1935, signed by Maikowski (BA R4901/2519: 122-124).

Just a week before this letter to the Minister of Education, Maikowski submitted a lengthy memorandum from the League of Waldorf Schools to Rudolf Hess, one of the Waldorf movement's most prominent supporters.⁴⁴ Under the title "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; the Waldorf movement not only presented itself as a microcosm or model of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, but claimed to have already realized on its own terms what Nazism was still trying to achieve in its broader restructuring of German society as a whole. According to their official representative, writing to an ally rather than a skeptic, Waldorf schools "realize on a small scale that which the national community strives for on a large scale in the National Socialist state."⁴⁵ The memorandum stressed Waldorf pedagogy's dedication to "the soul-spiritual and physical renewal and recovery of our *Volk* and our spiritual life" while emphasizing the integral connection between physical and spiritual health. A section on "Waldorf schools in the new Germany" boasted of the schools' essential ability to educate pupils toward "national convictions" through "cultivating the national idea and accentuating the essence and the duties of the German spirit" (*die Pflege des völkischen Gedankens und die Betonung des Wesens und der Aufgaben des deutschen Geistes*).⁴⁶ Waldorf education, the memorandum proclaimed, is "in harmony with the fundamental attitude of the National Socialist state."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ League of Waldorf Schools to Rudolf Hess, March 2, 1935, signed by Maikowski, containing a seventeen-page memorandum titled "Wesen und Aufgaben der Waldorfschulen" (BA R4901/2519: 243-262). The document is reproduced in Wagner, *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung* vol. II, 83-102.

⁴⁵ "Wesen und Aufgaben der Waldorfschulen," 2 (BA R4901/2519: 246): "Sie verwirklichen im Kleinen weitgehendst, was in der Volksgemeinschaft im nationalsozialistischen Staate im Großen erstrebt wird."

⁴⁶ "Wesen und Aufgaben der Waldorfschulen," 9 (BA R4901/2519: 253): "Die Erziehung zu nationaler Gesinnung liegt in dem Wesen der Waldorfschulen begründet."

⁴⁷ "Wesen und Aufgaben der Waldorfschulen," 11 (BA R4901/2519: 255). The memorandum also underscored the close cooperation between the League of Waldorf Schools and Nazi party members Eugen and Margarete Link.

Even in later years, after a series of severe setbacks for this positive vision of Waldorf education as part of the ‘new Germany’, comparable hopes continued to animate central segments of the Waldorf movement. An internal report from the director of the Stuttgart Waldorf school in the school’s October 1937 newsletter declared that “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 state.”⁴⁸ Another article in the same newsletter reflected the 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?⁴⁹

In spite of difficult circumstances and upcoming challenges, the article expressed confidence: “The conviction that our efforts are in accordance with the re-ascent of our German *Volk* and fatherland gives us the strength to meet these challenges.” This all-important re-ascent of Germany (*Wiederaufstieg unseres deutschen Volkes und Vaterlandes*) was cast in explicit reference to the Nazi ‘revolution’ of 1933, seen as a great 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

⁴⁸ “Bericht des Leiters der Waldorfschule” *Mitteilungen an die Mitglieder des Waldorfschulvereins Stuttgart*, no. 16, October 1937, 7; a copy is in BA R58/6220b. The report went on to note with pride the role of Waldorf pupils within the Hitler Youth. It is important to keep in mind that such sources were internal communications from within the Waldorf movement itself rather than texts prepared for Nazi functionaries. Anthroposophical accounts claim that significant accommodation to Nazi expectations can only be found in texts submitted to party or state authorities, not in internal Waldorf sources; this 1937 newsletter is one of multiple counter-examples.

⁴⁹ “Schulbetrachtungen” *Mitteilungen an die Mitglieder des Waldorfschulvereins Stuttgart* October 1937, 16.

which they had contributed toward this task would now find recognition and support.⁵⁰

These hopes, however, were not to be fulfilled. While the efforts of the Waldorf movement to establish their place within the ‘new Germany’ met with a number of remarkable successes, they eventually faced harsh defeat. This mixed record is explicable not primarily in terms of the competing factions within the Waldorf milieu but above all in terms of the rival groupings within the Nazi movement, who disagreed fundamentally on the suitability of Waldorf education for the re-ascent of Germany under National Socialist leadership. As with other anthroposophical 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. The Nazi officials who opposed Waldorf education did so for a variety of reasons, which can be roughly sorted into three categories: intense aversion to anthroposophy as a whole and to occultism as a rival worldview; opposition to private schools as such; and standard educational concerns about specific aspects of Waldorf pedagogy, regardless of its contested relation to Nazi values.

Heydrich’s November 1935 order dissolving the Anthroposophical Society disparaged Waldorf schools for their “individualistic” methods, which had “nothing in common with National Socialist educational principles,” but it did not ban the schools themselves.⁵¹ For several years afterward the Gestapo and SD remained notably restrained in their actions against Waldorf schools. Gestapo inspections of the Waldorf

⁵⁰ Ibid., 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.” As will be examined shortly, the Stuttgart school had suffered considerable harassment by regional Nazi authorities and was forced to close in 1938.

⁵¹ Heydrich’s November 16, 1935 order is reproduced in Wagner, *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung* vol. I, 13. For a representative example of the SD’s perspective on Waldorf pedagogy as dangerously individualistic, see internal SD memo from August 22, 1935 (BA R58/6195/3: 479-480).

schools in Stuttgart, Breslau, Dresden, Hannover and Kassel in November 1935 produced no incriminating evidence, and Heydrich's men largely backed off after that.⁵² As late as January 1937, the Gestapo reported to Hess's office that it was not engaged in surveillance of Waldorf schools.⁵³ The anti-occultist faction within the Gestapo and the SD, however, remained committed to the eventual goal of eradicating anthroposophical institutions from German public life.

Aside from these powerful enemies, several Waldorf schools also 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 governorship of Württemberg as well as the position of provincial Minister of Culture, with responsibility for schools, were both held by a longtime Nazi, Christian Mergenthaler.⁵⁴ Mergenthaler was an adversary of all private schools, and took particular umbrage at the comparatively successful Waldorf school in Stuttgart, with over 1000 pupils in 1933. He charged the school with spreading "dubious anthroposophical doctrines" and insisted that anthroposophy stood "in the strongest contrast to the worldview of National Socialism."⁵⁵ From the beginning of

⁵² Gestapa Berlin to Leitgen, November 22, 1935 (BA R58/6220a: 14-16); Württembergisches Politisches Landespolizeiamt, Stuttgart, February 4, 1936 (BA R58/6220b: 89).

⁵³ Gestapa Berlin to Stab des Stellvertreters des Führers, Munich, January 18, 1937 (BA R58/6195/1: 419).

⁵⁴ For background see Rudolf Kieß, "Christian Mergenthaler (1884-1980)" in Rainer Lächele and Jörg Thierfelder, eds., *Wir konnten uns nicht entziehen. Dreißig Porträts zu Kirche und Nationalsozialismus in Württemberg* (Stuttgart: Quell, 1998), 159-74.

⁵⁵ Mergenthaler to Rust, January 18, 1934 (BA R4901/2519: 5). The mayor of Stuttgart was also a determined opponent of the Waldorf school; see BA R4901/2520: 247. Even the Waldorf school's Nazi enemies were at times willing to consider forms of accommodation; Stuttgart education official Fritz Cuhorst, for example, recognized that the Nazi state could make use of various elements of Waldorf education, and negotiated extensively with Els Moll, Margarete Link, Leo Tölke and others, seeking ways to adapt what he found worthwhile in Waldorf pedagogy into a National Socialist framework. See Cuhorst, "Bericht über den Besuch der Frau Moll, Stuttgart, in Sachen Waldorfschule" May 10, 1935 (BA R4901/2519: 156-159); and Cuhorst, "Bericht über den Besuch des Sekretärs Leo Tölke von der Waldorfschule" January 9, 1934 (BA R4901/2519: 183-184); cf. Deuchert, "Der Kampf um die Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus," 120; Götte, "Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie," 527-28; Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 126-27; and Wagner, *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung* vol. II, 48-50.

the Nazi era, Mergenthaler did his best to obstruct and, if possible, eliminate the Waldorf school in his jurisdiction, which was the center of the Waldorf movement as a whole.⁵⁶

He was frustrated in this effort in part by the unlikely intervention of the national Ministry of Education under Bernhard Rust.⁵⁷ Through a series of contradictory decrees, Rust's staff played a decisive but ambivalent role in shaping the possibilities for the Waldorf movement in Nazi Germany, for better and for worse.⁵⁸ In June 1934, for example, Rust ordered Mergenthaler to allow the Stuttgart Waldorf school to continue accepting new pupils.⁵⁹ In March 1936, however, in the midst of a

⁵⁶ Through a variety of restrictive measures, Mergenthaler was able to reduce the number of pupils at the Stuttgart Waldorf school from over 1000 in 1933 to 850 in March 1935 (Leschinsky, "Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus," 258). Interestingly, during the same period the total number of pupils at German Waldorf schools overall saw only a marginal decrease. In mid-1933 the League of Waldorf Schools reported a combined total of 3136 pupils; see Uehli, "Denkschrift der Freien Waldorfschule" *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 356, with precise figures for each school (Leschinsky's estimate of c. 2500 pupils for 1933 needs to be corrected on this basis). In March 1935 the League of Waldorf Schools reported a total of 3105 pupils, indicating an overall decrease of only 1% from 1933 to 1935. In light of the considerably reduced numbers at the Stuttgart school, by far the largest of the Waldorf schools in Germany, the rest of the Waldorf movement was actually growing, not shrinking, during the first several years of the Nazi regime.

⁵⁷ The full name of the Nazi education ministry was the Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung (hereafter RMWEV). For background on Rust and his ministry see Eilers, *Die nationalsozialistische Schulpolitik*, 54-65, 104-20; Hans-Jochen Gamm, *Führung und Verführung: Pädagogik des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1984), 125-45; and Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 261-305. Rust was a frequently ineffective figure, and never arrived at a coherent policy toward Waldorf education. For an instance of the Waldorf leadership's view of Rust's ministry as their ally, see Bund der Waldorfschulen to Reichsminister des Innern, February 14, 1936 (BA R58/6220a: 75). Scholars have also depicted Rust as a supporter of Waldorf schools; see e.g. 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. Rust's efforts on behalf of Waldorf education, ambivalent as they may have been, are particularly noteworthy in light of the fact that his Education Ministry was considered to be dominated by the SD, the Nazi Security Service, which was the organizational center of the anti-anthroposophical faction within the Nazi apparatus; see Lutz Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher: Die Karriere des SS-Führers Franz Alfred Six* (Munich: Beck, 1998), 88.

⁵⁸ Götte, "Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie" argues that Rust's ministry tried to shut down the Waldorf schools from 1933 onward. This claim is incompatible with the evidence examined here. Neither Klein's nor Maikowski's memoirs indicates continuous hostility from Rust's ministry toward anthroposophy or Waldorf, and archival sources reveal a decidedly mixed record, as detailed below.

⁵⁹ Rust to Mergenthaler, June 9, 1934 (BA R4901/2519: 49). Rust also sent a copy of the letter to the educational administrations of all the provinces, ordering them explicitly "not to hinder the work of the Waldorf schools." (BA R4901/2519: 50)

campaign to prevent all private schools from taking on new pupils, Rust forbade the Waldorf schools across Germany from accepting new students.⁶⁰ To some extent, these conflicting responses can be traced to differences within the Ministry of Education staff regarding the merits of Waldorf schooling. While mid-level education officials held a range of critical views on Waldorf pedagogy, anthroposophical accounts identify two high officials within Rust's ministry, Helmut Bojunga and Albert Holfelder, as allies of the Waldorf cause.⁶¹ Bojunga was head of the Education Office in the Ministry of Education from 1934 to 1937, and Holfelder held the same position from 1937 onward.⁶² These were potent figures on Waldorf's side in the complex controversy over the schools' future, but their actions were not always unequivocal, much less effective.⁶³ Mergenthaler succeeded in shutting down the Stuttgart Waldorf school in April 1938.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ RMWEV, March 12, 1936 (BA R58/6220a: 103; BA R58/6194/1: 293). Shortly thereafter, however, 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. See 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).

⁶¹ On Holfelder as Waldorf ally see Deuchert, "Der Kampf um die Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus," 118; cf. Klein, *Begegnungen*, 88. On Bojunga see Maikowski, *Schicksalswege auf der Suche nach dem lebendigen Geist*, 143; Maikowski does not identify Bojunga by name, referring to him as a *Ministerialdirigent* in Rust's ministry who helped Waldorf representatives extensively and was a friend of Günther Beindorff, chairman of the Waldorf School Association in Hannover. On Beindorff's correspondence with Bojunga see Götte, "Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie," 438; cf. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 99, 125-26.

⁶² Eilers, *Die nationalsozialistische Schulpolitik*, 55. The position has been referred to as "Minister Rust's right-hand man"; see Klein, *Begegnungen*, 88, and Deuchert, "Der Kampf um die Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus," 118.

⁶³ Elisabeth Klein's assessment of Holfelder in the early 1940s, for example, was cautious and skeptical; see her 1941 correspondence with Alfred Baeumler (BA NS15/302: 57724-57872).

⁶⁴ Even after the forced closure of the original Waldorf school, classes continued for another full year, taught by the same teachers, for purposes of *Umschulung*, i.e. preparing Waldorf pupils for the transition to public school. Furthermore, more than half of the teachers at the Stuttgart Waldorf school were to be accepted as public school teachers upon dissolution of the school. See Stapoleitstelle Stuttgart to Gestapa Berlin, April 9, 1938 (BA R58/6189/1: 87).

Alongside the ban on accepting new pupils, the closure of the original Waldorf school dealt a severe blow to the Waldorf movement as a whole.⁶⁵ In the course of 1938 and 1939, several of the remaining schools closed on their own initiative.⁶⁶ The circumstances of these self-closings illustrate the ongoing divide within the Waldorf movement. The faculty of the Berlin Waldorf school decided to shut down the school in 1938 rather than accept further compromises with Nazi authorities.⁶⁷ They were

⁶⁵ The Waldorf journal *Erziehungskunst*, which had been published primarily from the Stuttgart school, folded in 1938 as well. It is worth noting, however, that new publications by Steiner on pedagogical topics continued to appear in Germany even in late 1940; see Klein to Baeumler, November 22, 1940 (BA NS 15/302: 57898).

⁶⁶ Anthroposophical sources give varying dates for these self-closures. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 375, claims that the Altona school closed in April 1936, the Hannover school in July 1937, the Kassel school in June 1938, and the Breslau school in March 1939. Götte, "Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie," 544, citing Werner, reports the same dates, while Deuchert, "Zur Geschichte der Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus," 105, gives later dates in several instances. Werner's dates refer to the earliest decision to close, rather than to the actual date of closure, and explicitly disregard the extensive *Umschulungskurse* implemented by each Waldorf school to prepare their pupils for transferring to public schools. His figures thus misrepresent by several years, in some cases, the date at which the schools ceased operation. For Werner's account see *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 96. Werner's claims are controverted by other evidence; see for example Emil Kühn, "Bericht des Vorstandes des Waldorfschulvereins," *Mitteilungen an die Mitglieder des Waldorfschulvereins Stuttgart*, October 1937, 11, by an official of the League of Waldorf Schools, referring unambiguously to eight Waldorf schools currently existing in Germany in October 1937; none of them had closed by that point. René Maikowski, head of the Hannover Waldorf school, reports that the school closed in April 1939, not July 1937 (see Maikowski, *Schicksalswege auf der Suche nach dem lebendigen Geist*, 159); this is supported by archival sources, e.g. the September 22, 1938 memorandum by RMWEV official Thies regarding his meeting with Maikowski (BA R4901/2521: 37). In a March 1938 letter to the Ministry of Education, eight months after Werner claims the Hannover school had closed, Maikowski proposed the Hannover school as a candidate for 'experimental school' status: Maikowski to RMWEV, March 25, 1938 (BA R4901/2520: 269-272). The Hannover school was still a leading candidate for 'experimental school' status in October 1938: Bund der Waldorfschulen to RMWEV, October 25, 1938 (BA NS15/301: 58113-58114). As late as April 1939, Elisabeth Klein noted that the Hannover school was not only still operating but still applying for 'experimental school' status: Klein to Baeumler, April 2, 1939 (BA NS15/301: 58091). Leschinsky, "Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus," 272 indicates that the *Umschulungskurse* were not completed at the Hannover school until 1940. Archival sources also make clear that the Kassel school closed in March 1939, not June 1938; see e.g. BA R4901/2521: 49, 56, 104.

⁶⁷ See August 26, 1937 letter from Rudolf Steiner Schule, Berlin, announcing decision to close the following year; photographic reproduction in Deuchert, "Der Kampf um die Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus," 128. The matter was not quite this straightforward, however. In December 1937 the school reversed course and applied for permission to rescind their prior announcement and continue operating past the following year. The municipal education authorities opposed this, and were backed by the Ministry of Education. See Stadtpräsident Berlin, Abteilung Schulen, to RMWEV, February 7, 1938 (BA R4901/2520: 251-253). In March 1938, when the process of *Umschulung* was to have been completed and the school shut down entirely, the local school officials allowed the third and fourth grades to continue until April 1939 in order to prepare the Waldorf pupils adequately for transfer to public schools. Thus the 1937 decision for self-closure was not fully implemented until 1939. See report

criticized for this decision by other members of the League of Waldorf Schools.⁶⁸ The schools in Altona and Breslau closed in 1938 and 1939, respectively, due to economic factors exacerbated by the general restrictions on private schools.⁶⁹ All of the remaining Waldorf schools, meanwhile, applied for official state recognition as *Versuchsschulen* or ‘experimental schools’ in late 1936. The outcome of these applications reveals once again the contradictory dynamics at work within the state and party apparatus in relation to Waldorf education and toward non-mainstream educational initiatives overall, as well as the multiple strategies employed by the Waldorf movement in its attempt to come to terms with the state authorities, and sheds important light on the broader context within which the negotiations between Waldorf representatives and Nazi officials played out.

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 and organizational principles, and was not granted lightly.⁷⁰ In February 1937, Rust promulgated demanding guidelines for the conferral

by Schulrat Fielitz, Stadtpräsident Berlin, to RMWEV, March 14, 1938 (BA R4901/2520: 276-277). Also in March 1938, Maikowski proposed the Berlin Waldorf school as another candidate for ‘experimental school’ status; see Maikowski to RMWEV, March 25, 1938 (BA R4901/2520: 269-272). The possibility of recognition as an ‘experimental school’ was still being pursued for the Berlin school even in April 1939; see Klein to Baeumler, April 2, 1939 (BA NS15/301: 58091).

⁶⁸ Leschinsky, “Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus,” 265.

⁶⁹ 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 that had better prospects of being accepted as state-sponsored ‘experimental schools’ by the educational authorities.

⁷⁰ 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 a *Regierungsrat* and *Schulrat* named Thies, one of Holfelder’s subordinates. Thies’ own perspective vacillated between overall rejection of Waldorf principles and willingness to countenance a continued role for some Waldorf practices, including the possibility of experimental school status for the schools he considered most promising, above all the Wandsbek Waldorf school; see e.g. the January 10, 1937 report by Thies on the Wandsbek school (BA R4901/2520: 118-120); March 1, 1937 RMWEV memo from Thies to Ministerialdirigent

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.⁷¹ Individual schools had to show “special achievement” in order to qualify. These hurdles made it difficult to gain experimental school status even for schools that enjoyed the firm support of high party organs.⁷² Beginning in October 1936, the Waldorf schools in Hannover, Kassel, Dresden, and Hamburg-Wandsbek applied for recognition as experimental schools, a step that would entail lifting the prohibition on accepting new pupils and make the schools directly subordinate to the Ministry of Education.⁷³

Frank (BA R4901/2520: 145); and Thies, “Waldorf-Schulen (Rudolf Steiner Schulen)” March 17, 1938 (BA R4901/2520: 261).

⁷¹ RMWEV February 13, 1937 (BA R4901/2522: 211).

⁷² The holistic “Wittmann method” schools provide an illuminating point of comparison. Named after Dr. Johannes Wittmann, author of *Theorie und Praxis eines ganzheitlichen Unterrichts*, these schools 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; see the August 5, 1935 evaluation of Wittmann schools by the NSDAP-Reichsleitung, Hauptamt für Erzieher (BA R4901/2522: 219). The educational authorities nevertheless decided to pursue a policy of slow attrition; the Wittmann schools were subjected to “a severe reduction” but “without an explicit ban of the Wittmann method” (October 1, 1936 report from Schulrat Elbertzhagen, Kiel; BA R4901/2522: 221). The “Jena-Plan” schools founded by Peter Petersen are another example; see the 1935 negative reports on the Jena-Plan schools in the same file, e.g. BA R4901/2522: 58. For context see 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: Peter Lang, 1992), 193-246; Robert Döpp, *Jenaplan-Pädagogik im Nationalsozialismus* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2003); Benjamin Ortmeier, *Mythos und Pathos statt Logos und Ethos: Zu den Publikationen führender Erziehungswissenschaftler in der NS-Zeit* (Weinheim: Beltz, 2009), 75-89, 128-34, 290-303. In addition, Wolfgang Keim, *Erziehung unter der Nazi-Diktatur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 124, reports that Montessori schools were shut down by the Nazis in 1936. Such examples indicate that the notion of a special hostility on the part of Nazi educational officials toward Waldorf and anthroposophy requires significant revision.

⁷³ Freie Waldorfschule Hannover to RMWEV, October 6, 1936, signed by René Maikowski (BA R4901/2519: 394-408); Freie Goetheschule Wandsbek to RMWEV, October 30, 1936, signed by Friedrich Kübler and Hans Pohlmann (BA R4901/2520: 8-20); Rudolf Steiner Schule Dresden to RMWEV, October 31, 1936, signed by Elisabeth Klein (BA R4901/2520: 44-64); Freie Waldorfschule Kassel to RMWEV, November 17, 1936, signed by Marie Kruse and Martin Schmidt (BA R4901/2520: 21-43). Substantial passages in each application contain identical wording; they were evidently prepared in consultation among the four schools, coordinated via the League of Waldorf Schools. The applications had been planned for some time; see Maikowski’s May 9, 1936 letter to Thies announcing the League of Waldorf School’s intention to work toward “recognition of the Waldorf schools as experimental schools” (BA R4901/2519: 350-351).

This proposal met with stiff resistance from local education authorities and was at first only reluctantly considered by the Ministry of Education staff.⁷⁴ By April 1938, however, Rust's ministry lifted the ban on new pupils and extended experimental school status to the Waldorf schools in Dresden and Hamburg-Wandsbek.⁷⁵ The reprieve came too late for the Hannover and Kassel schools, both of which faced tenacious resistance from local officials and closed in 1939.⁷⁶ Rust's belated intervention on behalf of the Hannover school was insufficient.⁷⁷ The Wandsbek school followed suit in 1940, despite having achieved official recognition as an experimental school. The decisions for self-closure were motivated in part by the ambivalent and dilatory response of Ministry of Education officials to the experimental school proposal; with enrollments already severely reduced due to the prior ban on incoming pupils, the remaining Waldorf schools faced seemingly

⁷⁴ See the January 8, 1937 report on the Wandsbek school by Schulrat Viernow (BA R4901/2520: 132-133), and Regierungspräsident Schleswig to RMWEV, February 17, 1937 (BA R4901/2520: 135); as well as the negative responses from education officials in Kassel and Hannover in March 1937 (BA R4901/2520: 296-297). The possibility of 'experimental school' status was evidently raised even in the case of 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: 292-294).

⁷⁵ 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); RMWEV to Reichsstatthalter Hamburg, January 26, 1939 (BA BA R4901/2521: 83). See also Alfred Baeumler to *Gauschulungsleiter* Wilhelm Rosenbaum, February 2, 1939 (BA NS15/301: 58105-58106). A February 1939 SD document refers to three unnamed Waldorf schools having been granted experimental school status (BA R58/6193/1: 198).

⁷⁶ See e.g. Regierungspräsident Kassel to RMWEV, January 7, 1936, signed by a local *Regierungsrat* and *Schulrat* named Brinkmann, an ardent foe of Waldorf education (BA NS15/301:58138-58140); Brinkmann's December 31, 1936 report on the Freie Waldorfschule Kassel (BA NS15/301: 58152-58153); Regierungspräsident Hannover, Abteilung für Kirchen und Schulen, to RMWEV, March 17, 1938 (BA R4901/2521: 45); and October 1938 reports on the Hannover Waldorf school (BA R4901/2521: 69-70). In the latter documents, school inspectors point out the effect of the school's uncertain situation on parents, who reportedly felt deceived by the school leadership's promises that matters would improve. The Hannover school was headed by Maikowski, who was also leader of the League of Waldorf Schools.

⁷⁷ Holfelder to Thies, March 26, 1939, reports that Rust has decided to lift the ban on new pupils for the Hannover Waldorf school, under the same conditions as at the Wandsbek school (BA R4901/2521: 102). It is significant that these decisions were handed down against the strenuous opposition of local educational authorities.

insurmountable obstacles and were unable to obtain a clear answer about their future prospects from Rust's staff.⁷⁸

By the end of 1940, with all of Germany mobilized for war, the only remaining Waldorf school in Germany was the Rudolf Steiner School in Dresden, headed by Elisabeth Klein.⁷⁹ The number of pupils and teachers at the Dresden Waldorf school increased substantially in 1938 and 1939, and Klein's outlook remained largely optimistic throughout the first half of 1941.⁸⁰ The school had the support of a number of influential Nazis as well as the approval of the Ministry of Education.⁸¹ External circumstances soon put an end to this last hope of the Waldorf movement, however. Along with other anthroposophical institutions, the Dresden Waldorf school was closed by the Gestapo in July 1941, in the wake of the June 1941 actions against occultism.⁸² In the end, anthroposophy's adversaries within the Nazi movement prevailed over its allies, after eight years of efforts to establish Waldorf education as an accepted part of the national community.

Several factors contributed to this eventual outcome, including the inauspicious conditions for private schools as such within the Third Reich and the skepticism of established educational authorities toward alternative pedagogical practices in general, which had little to do with any particular animus against

⁷⁸ See Maikowski to RMWEV, July 9, 1937 (BA R4901/2520: 177-179).

⁷⁹ The fate of the Vienna Waldorf school is unclear. With the Anschluss in March 1938, Maikowski traveled to Vienna to negotiate the school's future; see Maikowski, *Schicksalswege auf der Suche nach dem lebendigen Geist*, 155-56. Nearly a year later, an internal SD report stated that the school was still operating; see February 6, 1939 SD memorandum on anthroposophy, BA R58/6193/1: 206. It appears to have been shut down some time after that date.

⁸⁰ See the official report from the Rudolf Steiner-Schule Dresden, July 1939, written primarily by Klein (BA NS15/302: 58002), as well as the surrounding correspondence from Klein to Baeumler, February – May 1941.

⁸¹ RMWEV to Ministerium für Bildung, Sachsen, March 17, 1939 (BA R4901/2521: 92). Klein wrote to Holfelder at this point: "I do not foresee any problems regarding National Socialism, merely technical administrative ones" (Klein to Holfelder, March 16, 1939, BA R4901/2521: 89).

⁸² Klein, *Begegnungen*, 72. According to Edlund, "Anthroposophical Curative Education in the Third Reich," 184, auxiliary Waldorf classes in Stuttgart and Breslau continued through 1945 without interference from Nazi agencies.

anthroposophy or Waldorf or with specifically Nazi concerns. Waldorf schools had already faced considerable challenges from education officials and other government agencies in the Weimar period.⁸³ Conversely, many of the criticisms Waldorf schools received during the Nazi era concerned concrete shortcomings within the curriculum and teaching methodology rather than ideological objections based on National Socialist principles.⁸⁴ 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 actively supported Waldorf schooling as an appropriate form of education for the national community.

Anthroposophical sources generally credit a small number of figures in the party apparatus with long-term efforts on behalf of Waldorf education, most

⁸³ See for example the two school inspector reports on Waldorf schools from 1932, BA NS15/301: 58188-58189, which bear remarkable similarities to the surrounding reports from 1933 onward. Leschinsky, "Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus," 263 similarly notes that Weimar-era educational agencies often took a skeptical stance toward Waldorf, citing a series of archival sources including applications and responses from 1927-1932. This dynamic had largely to do with the fact that Waldorf schools were private schools, rather than with specific anxieties about Waldorf methods themselves or about anthroposophy. In contrast, Uehli, "Denkschrift der Freien Waldorfschule" *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 349-55 emphasizes the positive assessments of Waldorf by school inspectors in the 1920s. Klein, *Begegnungen*, 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. On the exceptional circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Stuttgart Waldorf school at the beginning of the Weimar republic see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1368-69, 1376-77; cf. Hahn, *Der Weg, der mich führte*, 686-87. More thorough investigation of the attitudes of Weimar-era education officials toward Waldorf schooling could provide fuller contextualization of the response to Waldorf after 1933.

⁸⁴ Such pedagogical concerns recur frequently throughout the extensive reports on Waldorf schools filed by various school inspectors after 1933; they are often mixed in with recognizably Nazi complaints as well, and a number of them come from representatives of the National Socialist Teachers League. A substantial cross-section of these reports is available in BA NS15/301: 58132-58180. The pedagogical criticisms range from charges of inadequate instruction in the natural sciences, to excessively large class sizes, to dismay at the co-educational nature of Waldorf schools; the concern that basic skills such as reading and arithmetic are taught too late; the lack of sufficiently trained teachers is a further predominant theme. Some inspectors noted the relatively poor performance of Waldorf graduates in comparison with public school students. For a representative example see Stadtoberschulrat Dr. Heilig to Regierungspräsident Kassel, December 23, 1935 (BA NS15/301: 58132-58134). Even the negative evaluations of Waldorf schools typically contained positive remarks as well.

prominently Rudolf Hess, Otto Ohlendorf, and Alfred Baeumler.⁸⁵ Each of these men did indeed play an important role in promoting and sustaining Waldorf initiatives during the Third Reich, and they are recalled fondly in the memoirs of Waldorf representatives.⁸⁶ Other powerful Nazi officials also intervened occasionally in support of Waldorf and its advocates. Hess's counterpart at the Führer Chancellery, Philipp Bouhler, provided early assistance to the leadership of the League of Waldorf Schools and arranged crucial contacts within the party hierarchy.⁸⁷ Hans Schemm, the founding leader of the National Socialist Teachers League, was for a time viewed as a potential protector by Waldorf adherents.⁸⁸ Even the Interior Minister, Wilhelm Frick, acted to impede the attempts by anti-anthroposophical Nazis to dismantle the Waldorf schools.⁸⁹ Elisabeth Klein and René Maikowski identify a number of less prominent Nazi officials who were supportive of Waldorf education. The Waldorf movement also enjoyed at times a notably positive reception in the National Socialist press.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Anti-occultist Nazis viewed all three figures with suspicion, and saw Hess in particular as the major obstacle to a complete ban on Waldorf schools; see e.g. the May 22, 1941 memorandum from Albert Hartl, RSHA, "Betr.: Maßnahmen gegen Okkultisten, Astrologen, Kurpfuscher u. dgl." (BA R58/6197/1: 13-17).

⁸⁶ See for example Klein, *Begegnungen*, 85-94, 112-20; Maikowski, *Schicksalswege auf der Suche nach dem lebendigen Geist*, 146-53.

⁸⁷ Maikowski, *Schicksalswege auf der Suche nach dem lebendigen Geist*, 144; cf. Deuchert, "Der Kampf um die Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus," 114-16, and Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 114. Bouhler's active support for Waldorf schools continued into 1934 at least; see Schulte-Strathaus to Rust, March 8, 1935 (BA R4901/2519: 238-240); cf. Wagner, *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung* vol. II, 77-79.

⁸⁸ Götte, "Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie," 424-26, 433-35, 444; cf. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 102-106. Schemm died in March 1935.

⁸⁹ Ministry of the Interior to Gestapa Berlin, February 18, 1936 (BA R58/6220a: 94); cf. League of Waldorf Schools to Ministry of the Interior, May 8, 1936 (BA R58/6220a: 117). The Waldorf leadership viewed this step by Frick as a significant boost to their endeavors; see e.g. Maikowski to Thies, May 9, 1936 (BA R4901/2519: 350). In the view of Ministry of Education staff, meanwhile, Frick had "intervened to guarantee further efforts with these [Waldorf] schools" (memorandum by Thies, RMWEV, January 10, 1937; BA R4901/2520: 120).

⁹⁰ The anthroposophical secondary literature invariably emphasizes the negative portrayals of Waldorf efforts in the Nazi media. These critical press reports were certainly real, but they tell only half the story. As late as mid-1935, Nazi newspapers favored Waldorf schools with notably good press, and such reports were indeed reprinted in the organ of the Waldorf movement itself. The August 1935 issue of *Erziehungskunst*, 134-36, carried three pages of excerpts from the local, regional, and national press on various Waldorf events, including reports from the *Württembergische Zeitung*, the *Württembergische Landeszeitung*, and the local Nazi newspaper, the *Stuttgarter NS-Kurier*, as well as the *Völkischer*

In practical terms, however, perhaps the most influential party and governmental figures working in favor of the Waldorf movement, generally behind the scenes, were Lotar Eickhoff, Alfred Leitgen, and Ernst Schulte-Strathaus. Leitgen and Schulte-Strathaus repeatedly used their positions on Hess's staff to promote the interests of Waldorf schools and defend them from adversaries in other corners of the far-flung constellation of Nazi agencies. From his post in the Interior Ministry, Eickhoff launched a determined campaign to establish Waldorf education as an integral part of the institutional landscape of National Socialist Germany. The work of this group was moreover made possible by the continued support of both Hess and Goering. Although the efforts of Eickhoff, Leitgen, and Schulte-Strathaus were unsuccessful in the end, they did produce impressive results over a period of years. Their demonstrated commitment to the Waldorf cause indicates once again that the received image of a monolithic Nazi movement uniformly devoted to eliminating Waldorf education is wide of the mark. Indeed even the most dedicated opponents of anthroposophy, from Bormann to Heydrich, occasionally relented from thoroughgoing rejection of the Waldorf project.⁹¹

In light of this highly ambiguous record, a series of questions present themselves regarding the evolution of the Waldorf movement between 1933 and 1941. How did the mainstream of the Waldorf community, and not merely its more outspokenly pro-Nazi wing, perceive National Socialism? How did other Nazis who

Beobachter, all extremely positive. Three excerpts were included from the *Völkischer Beobachter* alone, the flagship Nazi newspaper. Even in 1939, a lengthy article in the *Völkischer Beobachter* explicitly embraced the "healthy" aspects of Waldorf education as an example of what is positive and worthy of adoption from anthroposophy into National Socialism; see "Wissenschaftliche Arbeit am nationalsozialistischen Gedankengut" *Völkischer Beobachter* January 29, 1939, 5-6.

⁹¹ See e.g. Heydrich to Frick, March 3, 1936, arguing against an immediate closing of the Waldorf schools and in favor of incorporating "reliable National Socialists" into the faculty (BA R58/6220a: 97-98); and Bormann to Lammers, May 24, 1941, raising the possibility of turning the Dresden Waldorf school into a public school (document reproduced in Helmut Heiber, ed., *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei der NSDAP: Rekonstruktion eines verlorengegangenen Bestandes* (Munich: Saur, 1983), 585); cf. Leschinsky, "Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus," 272. Bormann's letter refers to the Hamburg Waldorf school as still in existence.

did not have a stake in the ongoing debates over anthroposophy, occultism, and alternative cultural movements perceive Waldorf? In what ways did Waldorf-derived conceptions of the German national community converge with Nazi conceptions, and in what ways did they diverge? Why, in the end, did the Waldorf movement's fervent attempts to portray anthroposophical pedagogy as especially suited to the education of the national community fail?

Many Waldorf documents from the Nazi period proclaim allegiance to the fatherland, to the nation, to the German essence, and even to National Socialism as the embodiment and vehicle of the long-awaited spiritual renewal of Germany. While much of this rhetoric may have been motivated at least in part by tactical considerations, the underlying national mythology is consistent with the pre-1933 anthroposophical view of the historical and cosmic mission of the German spirit. A textual analysis of these documents may be more revealing than a focus on the outward trappings of political conformity, though the presence of such symbols at Waldorf schools – including Nazi flags, oaths, marches, portraits of Hitler, and so forth – merits more attention than it has so far received.⁹² Written testimony from Waldorf supporters about their attitudes toward Nazism took a variety of forms, both public and private, official and casual. The following examples concentrate on positive expressions of political compatibility between Waldorf education and National Socialism.

⁹² For first-hand examples see Götte, "Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie," 418. Waldorf pupils were also active in the Hitler Youth; see e.g. the April 14, 1938 letter to Goering from senior pupils at the Stuttgart Waldorf school (BA R4901/2520: 283-284); "Bericht des Leiters der Waldorfschule" *Mitteilungen an die Mitglieder des Waldorfschulvereins Stuttgart* October 1937; Freie Waldorfschule Hannover to RMWEV, October 6, 1936 (BA R4901/2519: 396); and report by Annemarie Pahl on the Dresden Waldorf school, January 20, 1937 (BA NS15/301: 58164-58166). The text of the latter document is available in Wagner, *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung* vol. II, 24-26.

In a 1934 letter to a Nazi party liaison office complaining about Mergenthaler's actions against the Stuttgart Waldorf school, a party member and parent from the school declared that Waldorf education from the beginning had pursued "exactly what we National Socialists strive for," and insisted that the Führer himself would surely intercede on behalf of the school if he were made aware of the situation.⁹³ Invoking the Waldorf schools' contribution to the "new Germany," the letter writer maintained that his views were shared by all of the parents at the Stuttgart Waldorf school.⁹⁴ Four years later, after Mergenthaler's final blow against the school, 363 Waldorf parents signed a letter to Rust, Hess, and Goering asking that Mergenthaler's order to close the school be rescinded. The letter read in part:

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.

⁹³ Adolf Karcher, Stuttgart, to Verbindungsstab der NSDAP, March 16, 1934 (BA R4901/2519: 8-9). Karcher's son attended the Stuttgart Waldorf school, and had been a pupil there for seven years at this point. The letter combined anthroposophical and Nazi terminology: "Diese Schule, die sich stets in hervorragender Weise für das deutsche Wesen in Anknüpfung an die bedeutendsten deutschen Geistesgrößen eingesetzt hat, wurde von gewissen Kreisen, die früher ihre unrühmliche Rolle gespielt haben, gerade aus diesem Grund arg verleumdet und bekämpft." Karcher continued: "Gerade was wir Nationalsozialisten erstreben, daß die Kinder nicht zu Spießbürgern mit bloßem egoistischen Standesdünkel erzogen werden, sondern zu wirklich praktischen Vollmenschen, hat diese Waldorf-Pädagogik zum obersten Grundsatz von Anfang an gehabt. [...] Ich könnte noch eine ganze Reihe von sehr wichtigen Dingen anführen, die in dieser Schule in der Richtung liegen, die wir als Nationalsozialisten anstreben."

⁹⁴ "So, wie ich denke, denkt die Gesamtheit der Elternschaft," wrote Karcher. "Ich bin ganz sicher, wenn der Führer Kenntnis von dieser Angelegenheit erhält, wird er bejahend und fördernd dafür eintreten." He enclosed an essay by Richard Karutz, whom Karcher described as the "Führer der Waldorf-Schule-Elternschaft," and asked that the essay be presented to Hitler directly. "Dies ist bei einer solchen Sache notwendig; da muß der Führer selbst und nicht irgendwelche Instanzen entscheidend eingreifen, damit eine solche Stätte, wo urdeutsches Kulturleben mit Ernst und Hingabe gepflegt wird, nicht nur dem deutschen Vaterlande erhalten bleibt, sondern auch ihre gesunde Geisteskraft in befruchtender Weise in unser aufstrebendes Volk, ins neue Deutschland, hineinfließen lassen kann."

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.⁹⁵

A similar 1936 letter from 230 parents at the Wandsbek Waldorf school insisted that Waldorf pedagogy “fulfills the educational principles established by the Führer himself.”⁹⁶ Waldorf teachers and administrators expressed comparable views. In a 1934 letter to the Ministry of Education, the director of the Rudolf Steiner school in Altona, Franz Brumberg, emphasized that “the pedagogy of 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.” Brumberg declared that Waldorf schools were committed to “continue working in the field of education toward the overcoming of materialism and toward the powerful moral and spiritual renewal of Germany.”⁹⁷ In the wake of the ban on the Anthroposophical Society in 1935, such sentiments sometimes took the form of conceding that the Society as such was passé while re-affirming the suitability of Waldorf pedagogy to the educational needs of Nazism. One such letter from December 1935 argued that “with support from the party” it would be possible to “adopt the part of Steiner’s pedagogy that is still worthwhile today and expand it in a National Socialist manner.”⁹⁸

These views were taken up by the spokespeople for the League of Waldorf Schools. A 1938 submission from Maikowski to the Ministry of Education, for

⁹⁵ Eingabe der Elternschaft der Stuttgarter Waldorfschule, March 14, 1938 (BA R4901/2521: 9-22). The 363 signatories span the spectrum of Waldorf parents and include Eugen and Margarete Link, Emil Kühn, Erich Schwebsch, Hanns Voith, Erich Gabert, Ernst Bindel, Erwin Schühle, Irma Haaß-Berkow, Franz Lippert, Carl Stegmann, Margarita Karutz, and Friedrich Kipp. See also the March 1939 letters from parents at the Hannover Waldorf school (BA R4901/2521: 94-101).

⁹⁶ Julius Carlsson to RMWEV, April 28, 1936, co-signed by 229 further parents from the Freie Goetheschule Wandsbek (BA R4901/2519: 335-338). The letter cites several passages from *Mein Kampf* to substantiate this claim.

⁹⁷ Brumberg to Thies, March 7, 1934 (BA R4901/2519: 77-79). For Brumberg’s altered perspective in 1936 see Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 137-38.

⁹⁸ Regierungsvizepräsident von Heydebrand und der Lasa to Alfred Rosenberg, December 17, 1935 (BA NS15/301: 58248). The letter endorses the efforts of Els Moll to promote the Stuttgart Waldorf school and asks Rosenberg to support these efforts.

example, spelled out guiding principles for the proposed Waldorf experimental schools; the first of these principles called for an “administration in the National Socialist spirit.”⁹⁹ Elisabeth Klein, for her part, viewed her task in 1937 as promoting the “honest work of the Waldorf schools in building the Third Reich.”¹⁰⁰ The opening sentence of the draft constitution for the Dresden Waldorf school, prepared by Klein in early 1939 and meant as a model for other Waldorf schools as well, stated unequivocally: “The Rudolf Steiner School in Dresden stands on the foundation of the National Socialist state.”¹⁰¹

This perspective was shared by a number of Klein’s interlocutors within the Nazi party hierarchy, including Ernst Schulte-Strathaus on Hess’s staff. Schulte-Strathaus held that Waldorf schools “work according to National Socialist principles and produce excellent benefits.” In his view, Waldorf education was to be considered “wholly positive from the standpoint of the National Socialist movement.”¹⁰² His 1934 report to Hess on the Waldorf schools began as follows:

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).

⁹⁹ Bund der Waldorfschulen to RMWEV, March 15, 1938, signed by Maikowski (BA R4901/2520: 269-272).

¹⁰⁰ Klein to Baeumler, December 18, 1937 (BA NS15/301: 58127-58128). This letter, along with most of Klein’s correspondence with Baeumler from 1937 to 1941, is handwritten and notably informal and friendly.

¹⁰¹ “Entwurf einer Konstitution der Rudolf Steiner-Schule Dresden (gleichzeitig als Entwurf für andere Waldorfschulen)” March 13, 1939, signed by Elisabeth Klein (BA NS15/301: 58092-58094). The following sentence reads: “The administration of the school agrees to appoint only politically reliable persons to the school.” The draft goes on to outline the school’s proposed status as a state-recognized and state-sponsored ‘experimental school’ with tax exemption and partial public funding. Already in 1933, the Hannover Waldorf school had declared: “The faculty stands entirely on the foundation of the National Socialist state.” Freie Waldorfschule Hannover, September 26, 1933, quoted in Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 106.

¹⁰² Vermerk, February 21, 1935, RMWEV, regarding a meeting with Schulte-Strathaus (BA R4901/2519: 113).

The Waldorf schools have been fulfilling this mission, as articulated by the Führer, for fifteen years.¹⁰³

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 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.

Such views were by no means anomalous among Waldorf advocates. But even when a substantial congruence between Waldorf ideals and the premises of National Socialism was not openly proclaimed, the self-presentations produced by the Waldorf movement during the Nazi era insistently re-affirmed the special affinity of Waldorf education for the German national community. This motif is perhaps the most consistent thread running throughout Waldorf documents from the Nazi period. A 1935 statement from the League of Waldorf Schools, for instance, challenging the Gestapo ban on the Anthroposophical Society and its implicit threat to the Waldorf schools, declared that Waldorf education was especially suited to “the integration of the individual into the national community” (*die Eingliederung des Einzelnen in die Volksgemeinschaft*).¹⁰⁴ A contemporaneous document from the League of Waldorf Schools, titled “On the Nature and Method of the Waldorf Schools,” similarly stated that Waldorf pedagogy aimed to educate its pupils so that they would be “integrated into the national community,” in order to “overcome the damage from the Marxist-materialist era.” Drawing on the depths of the “German essence,” Waldorf schools

¹⁰³ Schulte-Strathaus, “Bericht an den Stellvertreter des Führers über die Waldorf-Schulen” May 14, 1934 (BA R4901/2519: 43-45).

¹⁰⁴ Bund der Waldorfschulen, “Erklärung” November 18, 1935, signed by Maikowski (BA R58/6220a: 4-5).

were eager to “join in the work on the present and future national goals and tasks of the German people.”¹⁰⁵

Emphatic commitment to the national community was not confined to official statements from the leadership of the League of Waldorf Schools. A 1934 essay written by Richard Karutz on behalf of the parents at the Stuttgart Waldorf school offers a detailed example of Waldorf advocates’ thinking on the new political situation in Germany.¹⁰⁶ Referring to the Nazi ‘revolution’ of 1933 as the “national uprising” (*völkische Erhebung*), the first page announced:

Since the national uprising of 1933, the launching of the nation toward the National Socialist unified people’s state and the most profound transformation of every political and social course of 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 person. 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.¹⁰⁷

Karutz continued:

¹⁰⁵ Bund der Waldorfschulen, “Vom Wesen und von der Arbeitsweise der Waldorfschulen” November 18, 1935 (BA R58/6220a: 6-9). An appendix to the text repeats, several times, the goal of raising reliable members of the national community and contributing to “the great social and national tasks of our *Volk*” (BA R58/6220a: 10-11). For a further instance of the League of Waldorf Schools emphasizing “the integration of the individual into the national community” as the aim of Waldorf education see Bund der Waldorfschulen, February 14, 1936 (BA R58/6220a: 78). Similar formulations can also be found in an undated document submitted by the League of Waldorf Schools to Rudolf Hess under the title “Was geht für Deutschland verloren durch den Abbau der Rudolf Steiner-Schulen” (BA NS15/301: 58254-58257).

¹⁰⁶ 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; see Götte, “Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie,” 538. None of the existing secondary literature quotes the eleven-page Karutz text itself.

¹⁰⁷ The passage reads in the original: “Seit der völkischen Erhebung von 1933, dem Aufbruch der Nation zum nationalsozialistischen einheitlichen Volksstaat und der tiefstgreifenden Wandlung aller politischen, sozialen Lebensrichtung ist die Schule so gut wie jede andere deutsche Lebenszelle und jeder einzelne deutsche Mensch verpflichtet am Neuaufbau des Reiches mitzuwirken. Zu dem Zwecke ist sie verpflichtet, den Führern im Schulwesen des neuen Reiches sich zur tätigen Mitarbeit zur Verfügung zu stellen und ihnen zu zeigen, was sie aus ihrer pädagogischen Erfahrung an positiven Werten zu geben hat.”

We declare, on the foundation of the New State, that we recognize the Free Waldorf School as an outstanding and reliable institution in accord with the New State. [...] 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 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 text went on to emphasize that all of the Waldorf teachers at the Stuttgart school share the same “national convictions” (*nationale Gesinnung*), a “unified worldview” centered on “the spiritual-cultural mission of the German *Volk*.” As a result of this commitment, and what Karutz called the “authoritarian” methods of Waldorf pedagogy, many Waldorf graduates have “enthusiastically joined the National Socialist movement.” Karutz underscored the school’s devotion to the “national community,” boasted of the military background of the Waldorf faculty, and quoted Hitler repeatedly to demonstrate the proximity of Waldorf’s objectives to the premises of National Socialism. As a particular achievement of Steiner and Waldorf education, he posited the “overcoming of materialism and Marxism.”¹⁰⁸ A final section of the text concerned “keeping hereditary factors healthy” (*Gesunderhaltung der Erbanlage*); the school must protect and nurture “predispositions of body and soul” and engage in “ongoing monitoring of each child’s health” in order to stave off “the damaging influences of the materialist and technical-mechanistic era.”¹⁰⁹

Karutz developed a similar line of argument in published works during the same period. In a 1934 article in the journal of the Waldorf movement, Karutz called for a return to “homeland and *Volk*” as well as “a conscious profession of commitment

¹⁰⁸ Karutz further claimed that Steiner insisted “again and again decades ago that an improvement of social life would not be possible as long as the Social Democratic labor unions continue to exist.”

¹⁰⁹ For additional arguments along these lines see “Die Leitung der Freien Waldorfschule. Stuttgart, den 20. Februar 34” (BA R58/6220b: 70-78). Götte, “Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie,” 454, 501, identifies Erich Schwesbich as the likely author of the document. I quote the text above in chapter 4.

to kin and nation” (*bewusstes Bekenntnis zu Sippe und Volk*).¹¹⁰ Above all, the article celebrated “love and loyalty to race and nation, to blood and homeland” as the pinnacle of spiritual achievement.¹¹¹ In December 1933, the same journal ran an article by the editor on the relation between Waldorf schools and anthroposophy. Here Caroline von Heydebrand announced that the aim of Waldorf education was to “place stalwart and duty-conscious people into the nation and the state.”¹¹² Further contributions to the Waldorf journal presented comparable instances of concentrated nationalist pathos in an anthroposophical idiom, portrayed as the essence of Waldorf education.¹¹³ Books and pamphlets by Waldorf leaders incorporated similar tropes as well.¹¹⁴ Other anthroposophists, meanwhile, published straightforward calls for a “*völkisch* education” as a “national duty.”¹¹⁵

This line of thought culminated in the series of applications for ‘experimental school’ status submitted by various Waldorf schools in late 1936. The first application, from the Hannover Waldorf school, emphasized the school’s commitment to “cooperating on national goals and tasks” and vowed that Waldorf education can

¹¹⁰ Richard Karutz, “Durch die Sprache zum Volk” *Erziehungskunst* June 1934, 103-122, quote at 107.

¹¹¹ Ibid: “Liebe und Treue zu Rasse und Volk, Blut und Heimat” (122).

¹¹² Caroline von Heydebrand, “Waldorfschule und Anthroposophische Gesellschaft” *Erziehungskunst* December 1933, 499-501, quote at 500: “pflichtbewußte Menschen in Volk und Staat hineinstellen.”

¹¹³ Examples include Erich Gabert, “Ansprache anläßlich einer nationalen Feier in der Freien Waldorfschule” *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 372-76, followed by Steiner, “Die germanische Seele und der deutsche Geist,” 377-78; Ernst Uehli, “Germanische Sagenstoffe als erzieherische Aufgabe in den Oberklassen” *Erziehungskunst* October 1933, 457-68; Heydebrand’s review of Rittelmeyer’s book *Deutschtum* in *Erziehungskunst* December 1934, 238-39; Steiner, “Vom pädagogischen Beruf Mitteleuropas” *Erziehungskunst* August 1935, 49-60; “Rudolf Steiners Pädagogik und die Forderungen der Gegenwart” *Erziehungskunst* February 1934, 537-47. The October 1933 convention at the Stuttgart Waldorf school was held under the motto “Deutsches Schicksal und Erziehung” (*Erziehungskunst* December 1933, 520).

¹¹⁴ See e.g. Elisabeth Klein, *Goethes Geistesart in der Pädagogik Rudolf Steiners* (Dresden: Emil Weise, 1937); Hermann von Baravalle, *Die Pädagogik Rudolf Steiners und die Erneuerung der deutschen Kultur* (Stuttgart: Waldorf-Verlag, 1933); and the review of Baravalle’s pamphlet by Caroline von Heydebrand in *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 386.

¹¹⁵ Hippel, *Mensch und Gemeinschaft*, 161 calls for a “völkischen Unterricht” as a “nationale Pflicht.” He also stresses “die Stellung des Volkstums im Unterricht” and “Volkstum als pädagogische Kategorie” as a necessary counter to materialism. “Es gehört zu den wesentlichen Einsichten der Gegenwart, daß Erziehung notwendig eine völkische, und daß deutsches Unterrichtswesen daher in diesem Sinne nationalpolitisch sein muß.” (160)

“preserve valuable forces for the national community.” Preserving these valuable forces included “efforts toward maintaining the species and caring for the natural hereditary material” (*Bestrebungen zur Art-Erhaltung und Pflege des veranlagten Erbgutes*). Waldorf pedagogy promoted “the struggle against the damaging influences of modern technical culture” and combated individualism, intellectualism, and materialism.¹¹⁶ The letter accompanying the application concluded by affirming that Waldorf education “raises young people to become strong in character and ready for sacrifice and to be active members of the national community.”¹¹⁷

The remaining submissions followed the same logic. The application from the Waldorf school in Hamburg-Wandsbek, for example, boasted that the school had always battled materialism and led “an arduous struggle for the German spirit against the corrosive contemporary spirit of intellectualism.” The school thus offered an educational approach “that the Third Reich especially can approve.”¹¹⁸ The application from the Kassel Waldorf school, meanwhile, asserted confidently that “the positive power of Rudolf Steiner’s pedagogy will find recognition in the new state.” This pedagogy was uniquely German: “Our form of education is rooted in the German *Volk* and belongs to the German spirit.”¹¹⁹ The application from the Rudolf Steiner school in Dresden employed much of the same terminology. Waldorf schools, they explained, simply want “to serve the national community.”¹²⁰

Thus across a broad spectrum of Waldorf documents, from official submissions for government agencies to internal reports and published texts, a considerable degree of consensus emerged around the Waldorf movement’s

¹¹⁶ Freie Waldorfschule Hannover to RMWEV, October 6, 1936 (BA R4901/2519: 396-399).

¹¹⁷ Verein zur Förderung der Waldorfschule Hannover to RMWEV, October 6, 1936, signed by Günther Beindorff (BA R4901/2519: 409-410).

¹¹⁸ Freie Goetheschule Wandsbek to RMWEV, October 30, 1936 (BA R4901/2520: 8, 18).

¹¹⁹ Freie Waldorfschule Kassel to RMWEV, November 17, 1936 (BA R4901/2520: 24, 28).

¹²⁰ Rudolf Steiner Schule Dresden to RMWEV, October 31, 1936 (BA R4901/2520: 55).

commitment to the German national community as constituted by the Nazi ‘revolution’ of 1933. The depth of this commitment can perhaps best be assessed by examining one of the more thorough contemporary sources on the pedagogical perspective of long-time Waldorf leaders, a series of reflections on educational principles and practices sent by E. A. Karl Stockmeyer to Alfred Baeumler in 1939.¹²¹ Stockmeyer (1886-1963), one of the founding fathers of Waldorf education, had been a member of Steiner’s Esoteric School since 1907, and remained a central figure in the Waldorf movement after WWII.¹²² His 1939 correspondence with Baeumler (1887-1968), director of the Nazis’ Institute for Political Pedagogy and one of the leading Nazi authorities in the field of education, is not mentioned in the existing literature on the Waldorf movement during the Third Reich.¹²³

Baeumler was a high official on the staff of chief Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg and headed the Office of Science in the so-called *Amt Rosenberg*, the bureaucracy nominally in charge of ideological education within the Nazi party.¹²⁴ In

¹²¹ See Stockmeyer to Baeumler, December 6, 1939 (BA NS15/301: 58033), sending Baeumler a copy of Stockmeyer, “Das Ziel der deutschen Erziehung,” discussed below; Stockmeyer’s letter is written by hand in a friendly and familiar tone. See also Stockmeyer to Baeumler, March 2, 1939 (BA NS15/301: 58099-58101), another effusive letter following up on a personal discussion between Stockmeyer and Baeumler. Here Stockmeyer further explained his views on Waldorf education and in particular the role of the anthroposophical concept of the ‘I’, citing both his own writings and Baeumler’s work. Baeumler took special note of one passage in particular, marking it in blue pencil, a passage in which Stockmeyer discussed the relationship between the ‘I’ and the “Erbmasse” or genotype, thus highlighting the connection between karmic spiritual inheritance and physical heredity.

¹²² On Stockmeyer’s crucial role in conceiving and founding the original Waldorf school see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1367-74, 1399; Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Chronik*, 406-411, 420; Hahn, *Der Weg, der mich führte*, 655-56, 685-87.

¹²³ Unlike Stockmeyer’s 1940 correspondence with Baeumler on behalf of the Waldorf School Association (see e.g. BA NS15/302: 57869), Stockmeyer’s 1939 letters to Baeumler are private, not official; he addresses Baeumler as “Verehrter Herr Professor!” and signs “Heil Hitler! Ihr sehr ergebener Stockmeyer”. There is no evident strategic purpose behind the 1939 correspondence; Stockmeyer does not discuss the current political situation of the Waldorf schools and does not request assistance or intervention from Baeumler. He seems to have found in Baeumler a sympathetic ear for his own pedagogical views.

¹²⁴ The full name of Rosenberg’s position was “Der Beauftragte des Führers für die Überwachung der gesamten geistigen und weltanschaulichen Schulung und Erziehung der NSDAP.” On the *Amt Rosenberg* and Baeumler’s role within it see Reinhard Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg und seine Gegner* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1970), and Ernst Piper, *Alfred Rosenberg: Hitlers Chefideologe* (Munich: Blessing, 2005). For further background on Baeumler see among others Winfried Joch,

December 1939, with the war underway, Stockmeyer sent Baeumler a copy of an essay he had recently completed, titled “The Goal of German Education.”¹²⁵ The document is another attempt to reconcile National Socialism and anthroposophy. Stockmeyer offered a synthesis of Baeumler’s pedagogical writings with Steiner’s works, quoting extensively from both, as well as from Rosenberg’s tome *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*.¹²⁶ Stockmeyer developed a theory of “spiritual-soul-bodily existence” and outlined an educational approach befitting the German character in its current “cultural struggle” against materialism and its corollaries. Building on the philosophical basis provided by Rosenberg and Baeumler, Stockmeyer heralded Steiner’s teachings as the culmination of the “German worldview.” In direct contrast to the deficient worldviews of the French and English, the German worldview is anchored in “honor and loyalty,” and provides the pedagogical foundation for the state.

Having thus established the groundwork for his educational vision, Stockmeyer ventured a partial endorsement of National Socialist thought, while simultaneously criticizing standard Nazi conceptions of the intertwined concepts of race and people, *Rasse* and *Volk*, as excessively materialistic.¹²⁷ The “physical reality of race” must be complemented by the “soul-reality of *Volk*,” the bodily must be integrated with the spiritual. A one-sided focus on the physical and material aspects of

Theorie einer politischen Pädagogik: Alfred Baeumlers Beitrag zur Pädagogik im Nationalsozialismus (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1971), and Hermann Giesecke, *Hitlers Pädagogen: Theorie und Praxis nationalsozialistischer Erziehung* (Weinheim: Juventa, 1993), 75-122; for brief overviews see Keim, *Erziehung unter der Nazi-Diktatur*, 165-70, and Gamm, *Führung und Verführung*, 91-94, 189-94, 210-13.

¹²⁵ E. A. Karl Stockmeyer, “Das Ziel der deutschen Erziehung” (BA NS15/301: 58034-58053), a twenty page typescript with occasional corrections by hand. Stockmeyer explored a related constellation of themes in a revealing publication two decades earlier; see the discussion of his December 1918 pamphlet *Vom deutschen Volksstaat und von der deutschen Erziehung* in chapter 2 above. In that 1918 text, Stockmeyer called for thoroughgoing educational reform in order to create the “Grundlage einer nationalen Erziehung” (10).

¹²⁶ Cf. Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (Munich: Hoheneichen Verlag, 1936). Baeumler wrote the introduction.

¹²⁷ See especially Stockmeyer, “Das Ziel der deutschen Erziehung,” 17 (BA NS15/301: 58050).

race, Stockmeyer warned, is distinctly un-German, a capitulation to English materialism. While acknowledging that the English are also of “Nordic blood,” he blamed them for unleashing a “war of lies” against Germany; just as the English are seizing German ships on the seas, so are materialistic English ideas seizing German minds. The way to overcome this materialist distortion of proper German thinking, Stockmeyer explained, is through Steiner’s doctrine of harmony among soul, spirit, and body. Because Steiner’s work is the pure product of the German soul, uncorrupted by materialist deformations and English falsifications, it “must become the indisputable measure of judgement for all educational aims and goals.”¹²⁸

This 1939 document provides several clues to explain the eventual failure of the campaign to present Waldorf schooling as the proper form of education for the national community. As with other anthroposophical endeavors, Waldorf pedagogy posited Steiner’s ideas as the final arbiter of true Germanness, a stance that was incompatible with Nazism’s totalitarian aspirations and difficult even for pro-Waldorf Nazi figures to accept.¹²⁹ Claiming for itself the right to set the standard of judgement for all educational goals, the Waldorf movement seems to have miscalculated its own chances of success after 1933 and overstepped the boundaries of what was practically attainable for a small esoteric spiritual group and an alternative educational tendency within the framework of National Socialist Germany. Moreover, Waldorf approaches to the spiritual significance of race conflicted with the more materialist cast of Nazi

¹²⁸ Stockmeyer, “Das Ziel der deutschen Erziehung,” 19 (BA NS15/301: 58052). Richard Karutz made similar claims in 1934, declaring that an anthroposophical approach “das Gebot der Stunde für die Erziehung im Dritten Reiche sein sollte.” (Karutz, *Rassenfragen*, 82) See also Erhard Bartsch, “Aufbau einer in sich geschlossenen bäuerlichen Volkshochschule,” October 21, 1940, BA NS15/304: 57090-57099.

¹²⁹ In some cases, Waldorf spokespeople presented this privileged relationship between anthroposophy and the German spirit as a simple identity; see e.g. “Die Leitung der Freien Waldorfschule, Stuttgart, den 20. Februar 34” (BA R58/6220b: 78), stating straightforwardly that anthroposophical pedagogical principles are “identical with the educational ideal of the living German spirit.” The same document also notes that “in der Waldorfschule stets mit grösstem Ernste der Kampf gegen die Kriegsschuldflüge, gegen den Versailler Vertrag, gegen die auflösende Tendenz des internationalen Marxismus geführt wurde.” (76)

racial thinking. This tension was already evident in the dispute at the Breslau Waldorf school in 1933, the incident explored at the beginning of this chapter, and the same conflict reverberated throughout the controversy over Waldorf schooling in the Third Reich.¹³⁰

While this divergence from Nazi norms is crucial to understanding the dispute, Waldorf conceptions of the ‘national community’ were not simply open to one and all. The March 1935 memorandum to Rudolf Hess from the League of Waldorf Schools forcefully distanced itself from Jews, socialists, and “international tendencies,” among others. 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.¹³¹

These remarks reflect standard anthroposophical attitudes toward Jewishness and Germanness, but they are conspicuously not framed in racial terms.

The root of the problem, however, was not the mere presence or absence of racial discourse within Waldorf teaching; race had been a part of the Waldorf approach to education all along.¹³² Waldorf schools incorporated *Rassenkunde* or

¹³⁰ See e.g. Adolf Krenn to Alfred Baeumler July 29, 1940 (BA NS15/302: 57858-57861), Krenn to Baeumler, August 5, 1940 (BA NS15/302: 57853-57857), and Krenn to Baeumler, August 26, 1940 (BA NS15/302: 57867). Krenn, an obsessive foe of Waldorf and of anthroposophy in general, described himself as 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. For an earlier example, see SD-Oberabschnitt Süd-West, “Bericht über die Freie Waldorfschule Stuttgart” January 29, 1934 (BA R58/6220b: 51-59), 4. The SD officer filing this report, an opponent of Waldorf, relays a disagreement with Eugen Link over the ‘racial’ status of Jews in the anthroposophical milieu. Whereas the SD officer pointed to the prominent role of Carl Unger (1878-1929), a “reinrassiger Jude” or full-blooded Jew, within the anthroposophical movement in the 1920s as evidence of the political unreliability of anthroposophy from a Nazi perspective, Link replied that Unger had “none of the negative Jewish qualities” and thus was not genuinely Jewish. Though Link did not provide details, Unger’s ancestors were in fact Jews, but his parents were agnostics without religious affiliation. Unger joined Steiner’s Theosophical Society in 1903.

¹³¹ “Wesen und Aufgaben der Waldorfschulen” (BA R4901/2519: 253).

¹³² Steiner himself instructed the first generation of Waldorf teachers to include “knowledge of races” in the elementary school curriculum: “You must also be prepared to tell about the different races and their various characteristics, which are connected with the natural phenomena of their own countries. After

“racial studies” within their curriculum before the Nazis came to power.¹³³ In anthroposophical publications prior to 1933, Waldorf leaders emphasized the role of race in pedagogical contexts, based firmly on Steiner’s racial doctrines.¹³⁴ Nor did the problem lie in an unwillingness to adopt specifically Nazi content into such courses. In its negotiations with Nazi educational authorities, the League of Waldorf Schools readily agreed to this step:

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 study of pre-history and a stronger emphasis on the Nordic-Germanic cultural sphere.¹³⁵

Since these themes already formed a significant part of anthroposophical thought, placing greater emphasis on them within the Waldorf curriculum presented

that you must move on to how the various races are mutually related to each other -- Indians, Chinese, or Americans, and what their peculiarities are: in short, you must give the children information about the different peoples of the Earth. This is particularly necessary for our present age.” Rudolf Steiner, *Discussions with Teachers* (Great Barrington: Anthroposophic Press, 1997), 23.

¹³³ The official Waldorf curriculum plan published in 1931 stated that *Rassenkunde* is to be introduced in the seventh grade: Caroline von Heydebrand, *Vom Lehrplan der Freien Waldorfschule* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Freien Waldorfschule, 1931), 25. This official curriculum also included discussion of “the contrast between Northern and Southern ethnic types” (41) and the cultural impact of “foreign national souls” (47). The very same passages appear 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 here on 28. Anthroposophical sources which claim that Waldorf schools added *Rassenkunde* to their curriculum when required to by the Nazis are thus mistaken; cf. Deuchert, “Zur Geschichte der Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus,” 101; Götte, “Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie,” 461. See also Elisabeth Klein, *Die Altersstufen und der naturwissenschaftliche Unterricht* (Dresden: Laube, 1930), 44-45, and E. A. Karl Stockmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner’s Curriculum for Waldorf Schools* (Forest Row: Steiner Schools Fellowship, 1969).

¹³⁴ See for example Caroline von Heydebrand, “Aus der Arbeit der Stuttgarter Arbeitsgemeinschaft” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* August 1931, 3-7, a lengthy reflection on Steiner’s lectures about “national souls” and “racial spirits.” Heydebrand underscores the ways in which both “Rasse” and “Volk” shape the maturing child, and highlights the necessity of making the child’s own *Volk* the centerpiece of education. The teacher’s task is to work “in allegiance to the archangels” so that the pupil can grow into “an organ of the *Volk*, serving the whole *Volk*.” See also the writings by Ernst Uehli and Richard Karutz examined in previous chapters.

¹³⁵ 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: 58115-58118).

no fundamental challenge. The problem had to do instead with 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 Alfred Baeumler, who did so much to support and encourage Waldorf advocates, was unconvinced about Waldorf attitudes toward “the race question.”¹³⁶ In December 1937 Baeumler prepared a thorough report on Waldorf schools at the request of Hess, sending it to Hess’s office and other Nazi agencies.¹³⁷ The report was a careful analysis of Steiner’s pedagogical works and their application within the Waldorf curriculum.¹³⁸ While commending the “deep and correct insights” underlying the Waldorf worldview, Baeumler emphasized that from a National Socialist standpoint, race is above all a natural reality rather than a primarily spiritual phenomenon.¹³⁹ He noted the considerable role that biological factors play in Steiner’s approach to the education of children, but contrasted the thrust of this approach with the basic orientation of Nazism: “Rudolf Steiner’s thinking is not biological-racial, but biological-cosmic.” As a result, “Steiner’s educational theory cannot accommodate the

¹³⁶ On the extent of Baeumler’s support for Waldorf see Klein to Leitgen, November 16, 1940 (BA R58/6223/1: 268); Klein, *Begegnungen*, 85-94; Maikowski, *Schicksalswege auf der Suche nach dem lebendigen Geist*, 146-59; Deuchert, “Der Kampf um die Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus,” 118. For Baeumler’s own views on race see 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.

¹³⁷ Alfred Baeumler, “Gutachten über die Waldorfschulen” (BA NS15/303), eleven page typescript. The full text is reprinted as an appendix to Leschinsky, “Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus”; see *Neue Sammlung* 23 (1983), 279-83. Baeumler also sent a copy of the report to Holfelder in the Ministry of Education (BA NS15/301: 58110).

¹³⁸ Baeumler’s reading of Steiner’s pedagogical works was considerably more thorough and systematic than his reading of Steiner’s other anthroposophical writings and lectures; see Baeumler’s notes on Steiner’s publications (BA NS15/303: 58499-58536). His most extensive notes are on Steiner’s educational texts, particularly *Erziehungskunst: Methodisch-Didaktisches; Gegenwärtiges Geistesleben und Erziehung; Der pädagogische Wert der Menschenerkenntnis*; and *Allgemeine Menschenkunde als Grundlage der Pädagogik*.

¹³⁹ Baeumler’s conclusions about anthroposophical perspectives on race are somewhat puzzling in light of his own stated stance on the same question. Joch’s thorough analysis of Baeumler’s published writings on race, for example, strongly emphasizes their non-biological character; see Joch, *Theorie einer politischen Pädagogik*, 28-31, 135-41.

concept of the national community.”¹⁴⁰ In Baeumler’s judgement, Waldorf pedagogy was incapable of making the national community the true “origin and goal of education,” because “community in Steiner’s sense is a spiritual community.”

In addition to his thoroughgoing critique of anthroposophy’s conception 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 further facets of Waldorf schooling, above all its anti-intellectual orientation, which he saw as fully compatible with National Socialist principles.¹⁴¹ The report concluded by endorsing the idea of transforming Waldorf schools into state-sponsored ‘experimental schools’ while modifying the unsatisfactory elements of the curriculum, particularly its treatment of history. Baeumler’s final sentence 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.¹⁴²

Several features of Baeumler’s assessment of the Waldorf stance on race appear to be based on questionable readings of Steiner’s texts and on only partial familiarity with anthroposophical doctrine overall.¹⁴³ Baeumler claimed that

¹⁴⁰ Baeumler, “Gutachten über die Waldorfschulen,” 3; Baeumler here uses the term “völkische Gemeinschaft” while at other points in the text using “Volksgemeinschaft.”

¹⁴¹ Baeumler, “Gutachten über die Waldorfschulen,” 8-9. In this respect, Baeumler portrayed Waldorf pedagogy as a significant advance and a much-needed complement to Nazi educational objectives.

¹⁴² Baeumler’s optimism on this score was shared by other Nazi advocates of Waldorf education. In 1934, for example, Leo Tölke surmised that revamping the original Waldorf school in Stuttgart 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), 3. The Stuttgart school had a total of 58 teachers at the time (Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 374).

¹⁴³ Baeumler’s dictum that Steiner’s thought is not biological-racial but biological-cosmic, for example, seems somewhat incongruous in light of the material examined in previous chapters; Steiner’s racial writings and those of his followers suggest that anthroposophy’s race theory, and indeed its theory of history, might more accurately be described as cosmic-racial.

anthroposophy fails to give pride of place to the category of the *Volk*, and he disparaged what he viewed as Steiner's "oriental perspective," which ostensibly prevented Steiner from appreciating the Germanic.¹⁴⁴ These claims are difficult to reconcile with Steiner's actual works addressing exactly this constellation of themes, works with which Baeumler may not have been acquainted.¹⁴⁵ In a broader 1938 analysis of Steiner's philosophy, Baeumler offered a notably positive appraisal of Waldorf pedagogy despite its shortcomings regarding race.¹⁴⁶

The fact remains, however, that Nazi representatives routinely criticized Waldorf education for its inadequate attention to racial matters. This complaint recurs in a variety of reports on Waldorf schools submitted by officials of the National Socialist Teachers League.¹⁴⁷ One such report combined approval and disapproval, objecting to "the peculiar cult-like character" of the Waldorf school while noting that the pupils were active in the Hitler Youth.¹⁴⁸ Lauding several aspects of the teaching, the report also emphasized points of commonality with National Socialism, especially organicism, anti-individualism, and anti-intellectualism. These significant areas of overlap did not preclude major disagreements, and the report additionally offered a detailed critical assessment of a Waldorf class on *Rassenkunde* or racial studies, finding it too spiritual, too individual, and too abstract:

¹⁴⁴ Baeumler, "Gutachten über die Waldorfschulen," 5.

¹⁴⁵ Baeumler's report on Waldorf schools does not indicate familiarity with Steiner's more extensive treatments of race, and does not cite them as sources.

¹⁴⁶ See Alfred Baeumler, "Rudolf Steiner und die Philosophie" (BA NS15/303: 58344-58376). The text is reprinted in Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 394-404. Baeumler submitted the undated document to Hess in October 1938.

¹⁴⁷ There were exceptions to this trend; see e.g. the undated report by Lotte Rühlemann, a regional official in the Nazi women's organization, on her visit to the Dresden Waldorf school (BA NS15/301: 58161-58163), a typically mixed assessment of Waldorf schooling, combining praise and censure. Rühlemann noted the school's classes in "biology and racial questions" and offered no criticism of the content of these courses, objecting instead to their co-educational character: "Gerade in diesen Fächern wünscht man doch, daß das heranwachsende Mädchel von einer Frau allein betreut wird."

¹⁴⁸ Undated report by Erna Stamm on her visit to the Hannover Waldorf school (BA NS15/301: 58170-58172).

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.¹⁴⁹

Another report from 1937 similarly contained a number of very positive comments on Waldorf curriculum and teaching but noted with dismay that the underlying framework is “Theosophy” rather than “our National Socialist worldview.” In view of the school's considerable strengths and potential contributions to Nazi education, the author of the report, a National Socialist Teachers League official, 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.”¹⁵⁰

These remarks point to the core of the controversy over Waldorf schooling in the Third Reich. Other concerns, from occultism to individualism to elitism, were no doubt important to this controversy.¹⁵¹ Some Nazis distrusted all private schools as enclaves of privilege, and considered anthroposophy an elitist doctrine suffused with disdain for the masses. The arguments put forward by Waldorf advocates were

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. (BA NS15/301: 58171).

¹⁵⁰ March 9, 1937 report by Marie Niemax, local official of the National Socialist Teachers League, on her visit to the Waldorf school in Hamburg-Wandsbek (BA NS15/301: 58173-58174).

¹⁵¹ For instances of Nazi anti-occultist sentiment in connection with the Waldorf movement, see the June 1941 SD list of “publishing houses in the service of occult groups,” including the Waldorf-Verlag, Stuttgart: SD-Leitabschnitt Stuttgart to RSHA, June 1, 1941, Betrifft: Verlage, die im Dienste okkulturer Gruppen stehen (BA R58/5660: 255). Other SD analysts, meanwhile, discerned covert individualism in the Waldorf belief that pupils are karmically formed before birth; see the August 22, 1935 SD memo on “Anthroposophische Pädagogik und Wirtschaftslehre” (BA R58/6195/3). The same document also portrays Waldorf pedagogy as based upon an internationalist worldview indebted to freemasonry. See in addition the 1935 analysis of the Altona Waldorf school, arguing that occultism is “a grave danger for the youth, indeed a poison for the soul, which stands in direct contrast to the National Socialist worldview.” Staatspolizeistelle Kiel, December 16, 1935 (BA R58/6190: 21).

moreover often incoherent; sometimes Waldorf advocates argued that their pedagogy had nothing to do with anthroposophy, at other times they highlighted the ideological overlap between anthroposophy and National Socialism, or simply emphasized Steiner's national credentials, and in a number of cases they insisted on both the great individual benefits of Waldorf education and its anti-individualistic devotion to the national community. Many Nazis were not convinced by this eclectic approach.¹⁵²

The available room for ideological maneuvering was in any case obviously limited during the Third Reich. It is nevertheless significant that controversies over Waldorf schooling so frequently returned to the contested questions of nation and race. Indeed the other disputes surrounding Waldorf in the Nazi era were, in a sense, mediated through debates around race and nation. To an extent, the sometimes profound differences between some Nazis and some Waldorf representatives on "the race question" were themselves rooted in an underlying disagreement over the nature and limits of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the national community.

This analysis makes possible an alternative interpretive approach that differs from, but is potentially compatible with, the standard interpretations offered by anthroposophists and non-anthroposophists alike. Waldorf official Wenzel Götte, for example, argues that Waldorf understandings of the concept of the 'national community' during the Third Reich differed fundamentally from Nazi understandings of the same concept, but does not explore the convoluted details of both similarity and difference examined in previous chapters.¹⁵³ Above all, Götte and other anthroposophical commentators ignore or deny the broad areas of overlap between Waldorf's anthroposophical principles and National Socialist ideas. For historian of pedagogy

¹⁵² See e.g. SD-Oberabschnitt Süd-West, "Bericht über die Freie Waldorfschule Stuttgart" January 29, 1934 (BA R58/6220b: 51-59), 7, accusing Waldorf schools of promoting individualist education: "The National Socialist educational ideal is not the training of individuals, but educating for the national community."

¹⁵³ See in particular Götte, "Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie," 500-501.

Achim Leschinsky, on the other hand, it is precisely this overlap that facilitated the partial convergence between Waldorf schooling and the educational expectations of the Nazi state. Leschinsky, however, locates the ideological proximity between anthroposophy and Nazism in a shared anti-modernist framework, and in particular a shared opposition to materialism, liberalism, rationalism, and intellectualism.¹⁵⁴

There is much to be said for this thesis, though it may depend in part on an insufficiently nuanced conception of the ‘modern’.¹⁵⁵ The alternative analysis proposed here attempts a more complex interpretation, while providing few unambiguous conclusions. Focusing on positive invocations of national community rather than rejection of liberalism, materialism, and individualism yields a highly conflicted picture of the interaction between Waldorf ambitions and Nazi limitations. Conceptual affinities did not always lead to practical cooperation, and fine distinctions at the level of ideas sometimes became coarser when institutional priorities were at stake. Indeed in some ways, the particulars of anthroposophical doctrine on nation and race stood in the way of a closer convergence with elements of National Socialism rather than facilitating it. This was nevertheless 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 that led to their opposition, not the differences; Waldorf versions of the national

¹⁵⁴ Leschinsky, “Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus,” 273-75. Despite interpretive disagreements over the anti-modern character of the positions involved, my research largely confirms Leschinsky’s findings.

¹⁵⁵ For important context cf. Bavaj, *Die Ambivalenz der Moderne im Nationalsozialismus*.

community constituted a kind of mirror image of Nazi ideals, one which Nazism itself could not abide.¹⁵⁶

For those Nazis already inclined to be skeptical of an esoteric worldview, anthroposophy's pedagogical aspirations were likely to be unsettling rather than reassuring. Waldorf seemed to proffer 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*. In anthroposophist eyes, the Nazi movement had tried to understand these things but had not entirely succeeded. At stake was a debate over the proper form and parameters of the German mission in the world, a debate grounded in common assumptions about national destiny and a common sense of mission. From this perspective, the ideological dimensions of the controversy between some Nazis and some 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, the German vocation, and the nature of the *Volk*, of the German essence, of the nation itself.

¹⁵⁶ I am indebted to Taran Kang for this image.

Chapter 6

The Nazi Campaign against Occultism

On June 9, 1941, less than two weeks before Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the Nazi domestic security services launched an all-out campaign against occultist organizations, practices, and individuals. Officially dubbed the “Campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences” (*Aktion gegen Geheimlehren und sogenannte Geheimwissenschaften*), this intensive effort aimed at the definitive elimination of occult activities and beliefs from the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the German national community. Both the timing and the extent of this campaign appear difficult to explain at a moment when the Nazi leadership had more pressing concerns demanding attention. Why did the Nazi security services put so much effort into pursuing socially marginal occult groups in June 1941? Exploring this question offers insights into the inner workings of several of the most formidable Nazi agencies and reveals the complexities and contradictions at the heart of the contested relationship between occultism and National Socialism.

There had long been a hard-line anti-occultist faction within the Nazi movement, concentrated above all in the SD, the *Sicherheitsdienst* or ‘security service’ of the SS. Several of the chief supporters of occultist tendencies, meanwhile, were backed by the staff of Rudolf Hess in his official position as Deputy of the Führer and nominal head of the Nazi party, and Hess himself was the highest-ranking and most visible Nazi protector of anthroposophical endeavors in particular. This longstanding intra-Nazi tension over the status of occult groups was complicated by the pivotal role of Martin Bormann, technically Hess’s subordinate but in significant respects his de facto equal in terms of practical power, influence, and access to Hitler. Bormann was a confirmed opponent of occult organizations and a crucial ally of the SD, which was

commanded by Reinhard Heydrich and 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 indispensable counterpart in this endeavor was the Gestapo, the 'secret police' of the Nazi state. The institutional development of these two closely intertwined but significantly distinct Nazi agencies, and their peculiar dynamic of simultaneous cooperation and competition, provide essential background to the anti-occultist campaign that culminated in June 1941. The SD's enduring hostility toward occult groups and esoteric doctrines stemmed in part from the perceived organizational competition that such currents represented, but the anti-occultist faction of the SD viewed occult tendencies 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 believers in or practitioners of supposed occult arts. Esoteric movements with an identifiable 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, the process through which this perception developed indicates that official Nazi hostility toward organized occult groups depended as much on underlying ideological similarity as on overt ideological distance.

The story of the Nazi campaign against occultism has been told before, in mostly brief and partial accounts.¹ Its intricate origins and its complex contours, however, have not received sustained historical attention.² The following reconstruction will focus on the context of the 1941 campaign, its institutional background, ideological roots, and active proponents, and on the perceptions of occult thinking and behavior that gave rise to it in the first place. In contrast to previous accounts, I will argue that the longstanding tensions between occultism and Nazism which came to a head in the confrontation of June 1941 reflected a dialectic of affinity and distance that had governed the relationship between National Socialism and anthroposophy all along, exacerbated by a well-rehearsed SD dynamic in which familiarity bred enmity. The June 1941 campaign was, moreover, as much a move against pro-anthroposophist and other pro-occult Nazis as against anthroposophists and occultists 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

¹ For concise overviews and cursory references see Jacques Delarue, *Geschichte der Gestapo* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1964), 265; Kurt Pätzold and Manfred Weißbecker, *Rudolf Heß: Der Mann an Hitlers Seite* (Leipzig: Militzke, 1999), 269-71; Rainer Schmidt, *Rudolf Heß: Botengang eines Toren?* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1997), 199-201, 330-31; Jochen von Lang, *Der Sekretär: Martin Bormann, der Mann, der Hitler beherrschte* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1977), 167-69; J. S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-45* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 259-60; Ellic Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich* (Wellingborough: Aquarian, 1984), 192-203; Felix Kersten, *The Kersten Memoirs* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 88-89; Walter Schellenberg, *The Schellenberg Memoirs* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1956), 199-203; Breitman, *Architect of Genocide*, 161; Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 537-38; Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer*, 55-56; Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, 310-11; Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer*, 583-98; Kurt von Wistinghausen, “Aus der Verbotszeit der Christengemeinschaft” *Flensburger Hefte Sonderheft* 8 (1991), 131-43.

² Two significant exceptions deserve special mention: Corinna Treitel’s pioneering study *A Science for the Soul*, 210-42, and the minutely detailed but historiographically inadequate account by anthroposophist Uwe Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 301-43. Treitel brings a refreshingly sober historical perspective to these events, and my research confirms much of her account; Treitel’s analysis and my own, however, start from contrasting premises and reach differing conclusions. Werner’s treatment provides valuable information on the June 1941 actions, but his interpretation of evidence is skewed by an apologetic orientation toward anthroposophy. Neither work incorporates the substantial existing scholarship on the SD, which offers highly relevant contextual insights; I discuss that literature extensively below.

as well as settle old scores with various non-Nazi figures, including those who were in significant ways ideologically close to, and thereby competitors to, Nazism itself.

For a fuller examination of the particulars of the anti-occultist campaign, an overview of the institutional history of the SD and Gestapo will be necessary, in order to locate their pursuit of occult tendencies in the broader context of Nazism's fearsome but fractured surveillance system. The SD's fixation on occultism and other perceived 'ideological enemies' can be traced in part to its own uncertain status within the complicated apparatus of the Nazi party-state. Founded in 1932 as a small intelligence service for the Nazi party, 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.³ Even into 1937, the SD remained "in search of image and mission."⁴ With the gradual consolidation of police powers under Himmler's control between 1933 and 1936, Heydrich's SD managed to secure an institutional base but continued to face challenges in defining its own role. For the SD was not itself a police force, and was indeed not a state organ at all, but a party agency and an arm of the SS. Even within the context of party-state fusion that was a hallmark of Nazi government, and even on the tenuous basis of Nazi conceptions of formal legality, such structural parameters did have real impacts on how various Nazi organizations operated and cooperated. In the case of the SD, this meant cooperation with the Gestapo.

³ On the early history of the SD see Shlomo Aronson, *Reinhard Heydrich und die Frühgeschichte von SD und Gestapo* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1971); Robert Koehl, *The Black Corps: The Structure and Power Struggles of the Nazi SS* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 47-51, 80-81; George Browder, *Hitler's Enforcers: The Gestapo and the SS Security Service in the Nazi Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 105-52; and Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State: The Formation of Sipo and SD* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990).

⁴ See Browder's chapter "The SD Into 1937: In Search of Image and Mission," Browder, *Hitler's Enforcers*, 175-96.

With the SD technically a party organization and the Gestapo a state organization, the Gestapo was formally in charge of actual operations, depending on the SD for intelligence, research, and analysis. From the SD's perspective, this arrangement represented both a significant limitation and an important opportunity. To put it in concrete terms: If an SD officer wanted somebody arrested, he had to have the Gestapo make the arrest. But the SD was often able to determine the course of an investigation, and frequently set the overall priorities and goals for the Nazi 'security services' as a whole. The SD's dependence on the Gestapo for enforcement measures nonetheless marked SD self-perceptions, as well as its standing among other Nazi agencies, throughout its existence. In the words of George Browder, "The SD always seemed vulnerable to replacement by a more fully empowered and better financed police force."⁵ In combination with its somewhat unsteady early history and uneven organizational development, this factor formed the background for the SD's exaggerated efforts to prove its own indispensability to the Nazi cause.⁶

The resulting situation was one of ongoing rivalry and in some cases mutual disdain between the SD and the Gestapo, even in the midst of their day-to-day cooperation, and this rivalry helped catalyze an escalating radicalization of the SD's expectations and standards.⁷ Nowhere was this more evident than in the branch of the SD devoted to *Gegnerforschung*, the 'research on enemies' that absorbed so much of Nazi officials' attention. From the mid-1930s onward, the SD's cadre of *Gegnerforscher* were increasingly hard pressed to shore up their own activities in the

⁵ Browder, *Hitler's Enforcers*, 125; cf. Koehl, *The Black Corps*, 88-95, 123-29, 161-62.

⁶ For perceptive analyses of this dynamic see Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State*, 248-49; 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; Wolfgang Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger: Der Sicherheitsdienst der SS und seine Religionspolitik 1933-1941* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002); Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher*.

⁷ On the Gestapo-SD rivalry see Dierker, "Die Religionspolitik des SD" 93-97, and Browder, *Hitler's Enforcers*, 124-26 and 190-92. The same dynamic continued even after the 1939 incorporation of both agencies under the RSHA, the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* or Reich Security Main Office.

face of the Gestapo's success in eliminating potential opposition to the regime; their research role had become precarious and seemingly obsolete since actual enemies were scarcely to be found in Germany anymore.⁸ SD analysts had to justify their continued existence after the totalitarian re-organization of German society made the whole notion of 'enemies of National Socialism' radically different from what it had been prior to 1933. This motivation helps account for the shift toward *ideological* enemies, reflected in the establishment of the term *weltanschauliche Gegnerforschung* as a key concept in the SD's arsenal: SD officers began to see themselves as experts trained in the authentic Nazi worldview, compiling reliable information on the movement's assorted enemies, as they perceived them. In the process, SD analysts tended to overemphasize the ostensible ideological divergence between their various objects of surveillance and true National Socialist principles.⁹

The SD thus came to see Nazism as surrounded on all sides by invisible adversaries, working covertly – and in some cases even unconsciously – to undermine Nazism from within. And it was precisely those groups that seemed to share points of agreement with the Nazi worldview, particularly regarding concepts such as race, Germanness, and the national community, that aroused the suspicions of the SD; such groups were seen as even more dangerous than direct, open opponents of Nazism. The SD consequently focused much of its attention on these groups.¹⁰ In this respect, the treatment of occult organizations was in line with the general SD and Gestapo

⁸ Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 296.

⁹ In addition to Dierker's work, the best study of this phenomenon is Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher*. Hachmeister emphasizes the "paranoid aspects" built in to the SD's 'research on ideological enemies' (30) and notes its dependence on a conspiracy theory framework (118, 152, 157), while pointing to the strong incentive to play up the threat allegedly posed by their objects of study: the supposed 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." (145; see also 30-31, 151-53) Attention to 'ideological enemies' played a noticeable role even before 1933. The earliest surviving *SD-Bericht*, from October 1932, already includes a focus on "weltanschauliche Gegner"; see Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 146.

¹⁰ See Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher*, 118 and 171, and Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 133, 146-49, 278.

approach to all ‘ideological enemies.’ What made esoteric groups 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. This presented potential problems for bureaucratic procedures of intelligence gathering and evaluation; within the elaborate classification system the SD erected for its *Gegnerforschung* activities, the colorful variety of occult tendencies were scattered across multiple departments and sub-sections, and there was sometimes considerable wrangling over who had primary responsibility for which groups and figures.¹¹ In this context, movements like anthroposophy stood out as particularly conspicuous.¹²

The very emphasis on ‘research on ideological enemies’ meant that occult movements offering an elaborate alternative worldview attracted increasing attention from the SD, while simultaneously resisting simple classification. Anthroposophical and theosophical organizations thus occupied an ambiguous position in the outlook of hard-line Nazi observers, often falling between the cracks of the more established categories of ‘ideological enemies.’ Unlike some esoteric factions, the more doctrinally inclined occult tendencies were classified neither as religious nor as political groups, and they did not consistently count as ‘sects,’ a term which Nazi officials used very broadly.¹³ At the same time, the proliferation of ‘enemy’ images

¹¹ The same pattern applied to non-occult tendencies as well. Christine King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions* (New York: Mellen, 1982), xi, notes the role of “petty internal rivalries” in Nazi treatment of alternative religious groups in general. For background on the complexities of Nazi religious policy see Manfred Gailus, “‘Ein Volk - ein Reich - ein Glaube’? Religiöse Pluralisierungen in der NS-Weltanschauungsdiktatur” in Friedrich Wilhelm Graf and Klaus Große Kracht, eds., *Religion und Gesellschaft: Europa im 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007), 247-68.

¹² These factors were sometimes aggravated by the SD’s rivalry with the police organs; for a representative example see SD-Oberabschnitt Süd-West, Stuttgart, to Sicherheitshauptamt, Abt. II/111, Berlin, July 24, 1936 (BA R58/6191/2: 422-424), a three page tirade in which the local SD officers in Stuttgart complain bitterly about supposedly lax treatment of anthroposophists by the Württemberg Politische Polizei.

¹³ Aside from the Christian Community, the forthrightly religious arm of anthroposophy, the ample SD and Gestapo documentation regarding sects generally does not mention anthroposophy or theosophy. See for example the June 7, 1939 “Verzeichnis der seit 1933 verbotenen Sekten” prepared by the Gestapo (BA R58/405: 80-84); the related 1939 “Aufstellung der bisher verbotenen Sekten” (BA R58/5713/1: 253-254); the SD memorandum “Der gegenwärtige Stand der Sektenbekämpfung” (BA

offered many potential routes for placing occultist organizations and individuals under scrutiny.¹⁴ The SD also employed an expansive conception of the ‘occult’ in its research and evaluation procedures.¹⁵ All of this provided ample ammunition for Nazi officials in search of covert antagonists.¹⁶

R58/5713: 228-230); the undated SD “Verzeichnis der in Deutschland bestehenden Sekten” (BA R58/5713: 145-151); the undated overview of “Das Sektenwesen” by SD analyst Walter Kolrep (BA R58/5713/1: 232-234); and the 1937 “Richtlinien zur Bekämpfung des Sektenwesens” prepared by the SD (BA R58/5713/1: 162-164). There are exceptions; a 1936 internal document from the SD section on “press and literature” briefly discusses anthroposophy and theosophy under the rubric of “Weltanschauliche Sekten” (BA R58/7560: 64), and a Gestapo list of “Sekten 1935-1937” includes the Theosophical Brotherhood (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 57); see also the June 20, 1938 SD discussion of “Okkultistische und spiritistische Sekten” (BA R58/6074: 118), as well as BA R58/5720/1: 524. SD and Gestapo officials also sometimes referred to anthroposophists and theosophists as “Sektierer” or sectarians.

¹⁴ Thus different occult groups could be assigned to the rubric of ‘medical quackery’ or ‘völkisch religious groups’ or ‘para-masonic associations’ or ‘sects,’ among others. The German term *Sekten* generally comprises religious groups outside the framework of the mainstream Catholic and Protestant churches. Horst Reller, ed., *Handbuch religiöse Gemeinschaften und Weltanschauungen* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000), published by the mainstream Lutheran churches, lists the anthroposophical Christian Community under “Sekten,” along with Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc., while classifying anthroposophy itself, as well as theosophy, völkisch religious groups, and others under “Esoterische und neugnostische Weltanschauungen und Bewegungen.” In Nazi usage, the term *Sekten* could sometimes be broader still, encompassing not just Methodists, Mennonites, Mormons, and Pentecostal groups, but Baha’is, Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims as well. For background on the notion of ‘sects’ as a danger see Erich Geldbach, “Religiöse Polemiken gegen ‘Neue Religionen’ im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts” in Johannes Neumann and Michael Fischer, eds., *Toleranz und Repression: Zur Lage religiöser Minderheiten in modernen Gesellschaften* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1987), 170-97. For a fine historical overview of völkisch religious groups in particular see Nanko, “Das Spektrum völkisch-religiöser Organisationen von der Jahrhundertwende bis ins ‘Dritte Reich’”.

¹⁵ Christian Science, for instance, is consistently grouped with occult movements in SD documents, though it is not often considered an occultist religious organization today. For historical context see Laurence Moore, “The Occult Connection? Mormonism, Christian Science, and Spiritualism” in Howard Kerr and Charles Crow, eds., *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 135-61. For a contemporary critical discussion of Christian Science in the context of occult tendencies see Christine Fournier, “Das Reich der Gotteshysterie: Christian Science” in Olden, ed., *Das Wunderbare oder die Verzauberten*, 161-89. The Nazi state was not, of course, the first to subject occultist groups to scrutiny; on state responses to occult activities during the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras, including surveillance, suppression, and so forth, see chapter 8 in Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 192-209, and cf. Linse, *Geisterseher und Wunderwirker*, 118-19.

¹⁶ The surviving files of the SD *Gegnerforscher*, along with material from their Gestapo colleagues, are contained in the very large (but nevertheless fragmentary and incomplete) holdings of the former RSHA, collection R58, at the German federal archives in Berlin. The size of the collection can make it difficult to navigate, and the currently available finding aids are not always specific enough; thus a brief orientation may assist future research: Within the R58 files, materials on freemasonry begin around 6100, while the main body of files on the Anthroposophical Society extends from 6185 to 6195; 6196-6204 largely concerns theosophical groups, with miscellaneous documents on other forms of occultism continuing through 6223. Important relevant material can be found outside of these general parameters as well.

Several of the SD's customary preoccupations converged on anthroposophy and related movements: they were viewed simultaneously as potential targets of the Nazi struggle against sects, and as para-masonic or 'lodge-like' organizations under the supposed influence of freemasonry.¹⁷ Indeed within the SD mindset, the concepts of 'sects' and of masonic 'lodges' sometimes merged into one capacious category.¹⁸ This dual association with religious sects and with freemasons had serious consequences for the anti-occultist campaign. In internal directives, SD officers made very clear that their eventual goal was "the complete destruction and elimination of all sects."¹⁹ The notion of occultists as freemasons, meanwhile, fanciful as it may sometimes have been, carried even more dangerous implications.²⁰ In the worldview

¹⁷ For overviews of the SD's campaign against sects, see Wolfgang Dierker's section on "Das 'Sektenwesen' und die völkisch-religiösen Gruppen" in Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 200-09, and J.S. Conway's section on "The Persecution of the Sects" in Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 195-201. King, *Nazi State and the New Religions*, 231-38 provides a list of sects banned by the Nazis.

¹⁸ For one example see the collection of RSHA documents on "Sekten und Logen" (BA R58/1074: 26-34) with material on Quakers, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Anabaptists, Christian Scientists, Mormons, and many documents on freemasonry, all interspersed.

¹⁹ "Dienstsanweisung für das Sachgebiet II 1133 (Sekten)" (BA R58/5713/1: 153-161), undated, likely 1937. See also "Warum bekämpft der Staat das Sektenwesen?" (BA R58/5713/1: 231).

²⁰ Useful studies of the conspiratorial view of freemasonry include Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1723-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung, 1776-1945: Philosophen, Freimaurer, Juden, Liberale und Sozialisten als Verschwörer gegen die Sozialordnung* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1976); Armin Pfahl-Traughber, *Der antisemitisch-antifreimaurerische Verschwörungsmythos in der Weimarer Republik und im NS-Staat* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1993); J. M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (New York: Scribner, 1972); for summaries see Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein, "The Story of the Jewish-Masonic Conspiracy, 1776-1945" *Patterns of Prejudice* 11 (1977), 1-8; Urs Lüthi, *Der Mythos von der Weltverschwörung* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1992), 11-27; Armin Pfahl-Traughber, "Freimaurer und Juden, Kapitalisten und Kommunisten als Feindbilder rechtsextremistischer Verschwörungsideologien vom Kaiserreich bis zur Gegenwart" in Uwe Backes, ed., *Rechtsextreme Ideologien in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003), 193-234; and Wolfgang Wippermann, "'Synagoge des Satans': Die Verschwörung der Freimaurer und Illuminaten" in Wippermann, *Agenten des Bösen: Verschwörungstheorien von Luther bis heute* (Berlin: be.bra Verlag, 2007), 47-57. For a detailed examination of the role of occultists and particularly theosophists in the origins and dissemination of the Jewish-masonic conspiracy narrative see the chapter "The Conspiracy against the World" in Webb, *Occult Establishment*, 213-73. One of Webb's sources on this topic is the classic study by Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (New York: Harper, 1967), which also posits theosophical involvement in propagating such conspiracy theories via the fabricated 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' (see especially 109-11). Significant doubt has subsequently been cast on several of Cohn's central claims, and this aspect of his account may need to be thoroughly revised; see Michael Hagemeister, "Der Mythos der 'Protokolle der Weisen von Zion'" in Ute Caumanns and Mathias Niendorf, eds.,

of Nazi *Gegnerforschung*, freemasonry was a prominent and insidious enemy indeed, at the very center of the shadowy realm of secret societies and international plots, pulling the strings of global events from behind the scenes, above all as the inevitable counterpart to ‘world Jewry.’²¹ This view of freemasons was shared by Hitler, Himmler, and other leading Nazis, and the SD devoted a considerable portion of its efforts to ferreting out hidden masonic machinations.²²

Verschwörungstheorien: Anthropologische Konstanten - historische Varianten (Osnabrück: Fibre-Verlag, 2001), 89-101, and Hagemester, “The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*: Between History and Fiction” *New German Critique* 35 (2008), 83-95. For Hagemester’s relatively mild evaluation of Webb’s treatment, see Michael Hagemester, “Sergej Nilus und die ‘Protokolle der Weisen von Zion’: Überlegungen zur Forschungslage” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 5 (1996), 127-47, especially 130-31, 141, 143. For crucial context see the extremely detailed textual analysis and historical reconstruction by Cesare De Michelis, *The Non-Existent Manuscript: A Study of the Protocols of the Sages of Zion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); original edition: Cesare De Michelis, *Il manoscritto inesistente: I “Protocolli dei savi di Sion”: un apocrifo del XX secolo* (Venice: Marsilio, 1998). See in particular De Michelis, *Non-Existent Manuscript*, 23-24, 66-72, 118-25, 146 for compelling counter-arguments undermining Cohn’s (and by extension Webb’s) conclusions about theosophical involvement in the genesis and spread of the *Protocols*. Additional information is available in Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, “Contextualizing the Mystery: Three Approaches to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion” *Kritika* 4 (2003), 395-409. For earlier historical analyses see Benjamin Segel, *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion kritisch beleuchtet* (Berlin: Philo, 1924), and John Curtiss, *An Appraisal of the Protocols of Zion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942); for a recent summary of existing research see Wolfgang Benz, *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion: Die Legende von der jüdischen Weltverschwörung* (Munich: Beck, 2007).

²¹ For much of the SD’s history, the sections for ‘freemasonry’ and ‘Jewry’ were combined, usually with the section for ‘emigrants’ as well (‘emigrants’ referred to anti-fascists who had left Germany after the Nazis came to power); Adolf Eichmann began his SD career in the freemasonry section. The Gestapo followed a similar practice. In 1934, for example, the same Gestapo section dealt with emigrants, Jews, and freemasons; see the “Geschäftsverteilungsplan des Geheimen Staatspolizeiamts, Berlin, gültig ab 22.1.34” in which Dezernat II F 2 is designated “Emigranten, Juden, Freimaurer” (BA R58/840: 14); this arrangement was retained into mid-1939. In the first full organizational outline for the RSHA in October 1939 (BA R58/840: 169), RSHA Amt II, “Gegnerforschung,” includes subdivision II B, “weltanschauliche Gegner,” which contains five sections: 1. Freimaurer 2. Judentum 3. Politische Kirchen 4. Marxismus 5. Liberalismus. The obsession with freemasonry lasted well into the war; in November 1943 the SD was still internally distributing very nicely produced fourteen page *Informationsberichte zur Freimaurerfrage* (R58/405: 87-99). See also the 1943 SS publication by SD officer Erich Ehlers, *Freimaurer arbeiten für Roosevelt: Freimaurerische Dokumente über die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Roosevelt und der Freimaurerei* (Berlin: Nordland-Verlag, 1943).

²² For Hitler’s remarks on freemasonry as an “instrument of Jewry” and as secretly controlling Western governments and the press, see Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1935), 345; see also 721 for Hitler’s praise of Fascist Italy for prohibiting “freemasonic secret societies.” For background see Lorna Waddington, “Hitler, the Jewish Question and the Origins and Development of the ‘World Conspiracy’ Theory” in Waddington, *Hitler’s Crusade: Bolshevism and the Myth of the International Jewish Conspiracy* (London: Tauris, 2007), 12-30. 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.

While a number of occult groups did have historical and personal ties to freemasonry, a sizeable portion of the SD's treatment of occultists as quasi-masonic was based on the loose analogies and associational logic typical of conspiratorial thought.²³ The results were nonetheless very real; in addition to those occultist tendencies included under the surveillance of religious sects, many occultists came under the purview of the zealous SD struggle against masonry.²⁴ For much of the 1930s, SD research on occultism was handled by the same staff who oversaw the anti-masonic campaign.²⁵ Nazi attitudes toward freemasonry, in turn, revealed dynamics remarkably similar to those regarding occultism; substantial segments of the masonic milieu displayed extensive ideological overlap with important aspects of National Socialist thought, and not a few masons 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.”²⁶

²³ Historical background is available in Edmond Mazet, “Freemasonry and Esotericism” in Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman, eds., *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 248-76, and Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007). For a theosophical perspective see C.W. Leadbeater, *Freemasonry and Its Ancient Mystic Rites* (New York: Theosophical Publishing House, 1986; originally published 1926). On German theosophists' involvement in masonic activities see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 283-85, 300-01. On anthroposophical connections to freemasonry see *ibid.*, 961-1015; Wehr, *Rudolf Steiner*, 351-52; Möller and Howe, *Merlin Peregrinus*, 164-66; and van Egmond, “Western Esoteric Schools in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.”

²⁴ The best study of the Nazi response to freemasonry is Ralf Melzer, *Konflikt und Anpassung: Freimaurerei in der Weimarer Republik und im “Dritten Reich”* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1999); see in particular the chapter “NS-Staat und Freimaurerei” (180-217). Valuable information is also available in the work of Helmut Neuberger; see Neuberger, *Freimaurerei und Nationalsozialismus: Die Verfolgung der deutschen Freimaurerei durch völkische Bewegung und Nationalsozialismus 1918-1945* (Hamburg: Bauhütten, 1980), and the revised second edition: Neuberger, *Winkelmaß und Hakenkreuz: Die Freimaurer und das Dritte Reich* (Munich: Herbig, 2001), both of which contain a wealth of detail on the SD anti-masonic campaign. Much of Neuberger's analysis is compromised, however, by an apologetic orientation toward freemasonry; Melzer's study provides a salutary corrective.

²⁵ Examples include SD officials Erich Ehlers, Hellmuth Knochen, Theodor Christensen, and Erich Ehrlinger, as well as Gestapo liaison Karl Haselbacher and his assistant Max Bandow. Haselbacher also covered sects for the Gestapo. A crucial counter-example to this trend is Lotar Eickhoff, a *Ministerialrat* in the Interior Ministry who specialized in the struggle against freemasonry and identified himself as the “Logenreferent im Innenministerium”; in sharp contrast to the SD and Gestapo specialists on masonry, Eickhoff was an active supporter and defender of anthroposophists.

²⁶ Melzer, *Konflikt und Anpassung*, 228. The comment refers to ‘nationally’ inclined German freemasons. Melzer is also perceptive on the “un-political” pretensions of masonry. Pfahl-Traugher,

The litany of Nazi complaints against masonry offers insight into perceptions of occultism as well. Ralf Melzer's detailed analysis of a 1934 Gestapo report on masonic and para-masonic organizations highlights the report's exaggerated depiction of the ideological distance between freemasonry and Nazism and its convoluted attempts to explain away the numbers of freemasons involved in Nazi organs. According to the Gestapo analysts, masonic lodges were hotbeds of both liberalism and reaction, committed to international brotherhood, stood apart from the national community, and ignored or misunderstood the crucial importance of nation and race.²⁷ These were the very same charges leveled at theosophists, anthroposophists, and other occultists. The elitism and exclusiveness of both freemasonry and esotericism also seem to have offended Nazi populist sensibilities.

Prior accounts of Nazi hostility to occultism have emphasized the role of the Ludendorffers, a far-right fringe group, in promoting or even initiating the notion of an integral connection between occultists and freemasons.²⁸ While the Ludendorffers undoubtedly contributed to spreading this notion, they were not its originators, and

Der antisemitisch-antifreimaurerische Verschwörungsmythos, 79, similarly reports that most German masonic lodges were "nationalkonservativ" and included "völkische Kräfte" and that "ein latenter Antisemitismus war in zahlreichen Logen verbreitet." Much of this analysis is confirmed, if somewhat reluctantly, by Neuberger, *Freimaurerei und Nationalsozialismus*.

²⁷ Melzer, *Konflikt und Anpassung*, 186-87. Melzer's analysis notes the simplifications, distortions, and inaccuracies of this report and its portrait of the lodges, combining elements of real descriptive detail with purely imaginary components. Virtually identical claims appear in the files on religious sects; cf. Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 201. For an instance of the ongoing obsession with freemasonry see Heydrich's April 8, 1936 order regarding "Zusammenkünfte früherer Logenangehöriger" BA R58/405: 70.

²⁸ Versions of this argument feature prominently in both Werner's and Treitel's work; cf. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 23-26, and Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 218-20 and 224-25. Werner's approach to Ludendorffer polemics against anthroposophy is decontextualized; the Ludendorffers also attacked various theosophical organizations, along with other occult groups (for examples see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 236, 309, 315). Treitel credits Mathilde Ludendorff with linking occultists and freemasons and thus opening up occult organizations to Nazi anti-masonic legislation. This degree of chronological and ideological priority is untenable. For general background on the Ludendorff movement see Thoss, *Der Ludendorff-Kreis*, and Bettina Amm, *Die Ludendorff-Bewegung: Vom nationalistischen Kampfbund zur völkischen Weltanschauungssekte* (Hamburg: Ad Fontes, 2006).

their degree of direct influence on SD analysis is questionable.²⁹ Much of their rhetoric in the late 1920s and early 1930s was anticipated in Hitler's denunciations of freemasonry from the early 1920s, while other fanatically anti-masonic Nazi leaders such as Alfred Rosenberg firmly rebuffed the Ludendorffers' arguments.³⁰ Indeed the Ludendorff movement also attacked National Socialism vociferously, was itself a target of the SD's 'research on ideological enemies,' faced a variety of restrictions and penalties when the Nazis came to power, and was banned during much of the Third Reich.³¹ Moreover, the Ludendorffers' own worldview displayed notable commonalities with occultism.³²

²⁹ Despite the at times nearly indiscriminate character of SD anti-occultist compilations, drawing in some cases on the most obscure and dubious sources, SD materials rarely invoke or rely on the Ludendorffers as a source for their analyses of occult tendencies. For one of the few exceptions see BA R58/6191: 351, where SD analysts do briefly draw on Ludendorff literature against anthroposophy. The file BA NS26/2239, from the former *Hauptarchiv der NSDAP*, contains a collection of anti-masonic literature from the Ludendorffers as well as from SS officer Gregor Schwartz-Bostunisch. Schwartz-Bostunisch detested the Ludendorffers; see Schwartz-Bostunisch to Einwohner-Meldeamt, Berlin, February 29, 1936 (BA R58/6305a: 6).

³⁰ See e.g. the severe anti-Ludendorff polemic in Alfred Rosenberg, "Der Fall Ludendorff" *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* 6 (1930), 289-307. For helpful chronology and contextualization see Melzer, *Konflikt und Anpassung*, 41-53. On Rosenberg's harshly critical attitude toward the Ludendorff movement, and particularly Mathilde Ludendorff, see also his detailed 1938 remarks in BA R58/5713/2: 429-430; for a more respectful reference to General Ludendorff himself from 1934, see Alfred Rosenberg, *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs aus den Jahren 1934/35 und 1939/40* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1955), 41-42.

³¹ The Ludendorffers were targeted as a 'sect' and more specifically as one of numerous "völkisch religious groups"; see e.g. undated SD file on "Völkisch-religiöse Gruppen" (BA R58/5713/2: 456-459), and the June 20, 1938 internal SD document titled "Arbeitsplan der Sachgebiete: 'Völkisch-religiöse Gruppen' sowie 'Okkultistische und spiritistische Sekten, Astrologie'." (BA R58/6074: 116-119) Theosophy and anthroposophy were not classified as völkisch religious groups. On SD surveillance of Ludendorffers see Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 206-08. On Nazi prohibitions against the Ludendorff movement see e.g. Werner Best's May 11, 1937 order rescinding the previous proscription on public speaking for four Ludendorffers and relaxing other measures against the Ludendorff movement, measures dating from early 1935 (R58/1029: 39a). Nanko, "Das Spektrum völkisch-religiöser Organisationen" 217, reports that the Ludendorff movement was banned in 1933 and rehabilitated in 1937; cf. King, *Nazi State and the New Religions*, 236; Amm, *Die Ludendorff-Bewegung*, 176-200; and Karla Poewe, *New Religions and the Nazis* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 162. Treitel's claim (*Science for the Soul*, 322) that the Ludendorffers' ideology "was adopted as the official religion of the Nazi state in 1939" is mistaken.

³² Treitel portrays the Ludendorffers as simply anti-occultists and allies of the Nazis in the campaign against occultism, and does not take into account the Ludendorff movement's own occult aspects. Mathilde Ludendorff began her public career as a medically trained debunker of occult and paranormal phenomena, but by the 1920s her worldview had taken on significant esoteric strands as central elements in a vast and diffuse tapestry of beliefs. Ulrich Nanko notes the influence of theosophical and ariosophical ideas on Mathilde Ludendorff and on the Ludendorff movement (Nanko, "Das Spektrum

The focus on the Ludendorffers as progenitors of the occult-masonic conspiracy theory overlooks the crucial role of two other figures, Karl Heise and Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, in promoting this theory.³³ Their work, as much as any other, helped pave the way toward June 9, 1941. Heise, a Swiss anthroposophist who was also involved in ariosophical circles, was a prolific author of conspiratorial anti-masonic texts in the years after World War I. Two of these works are especially noteworthy: a 1919 book blaming the war on Western freemasons and Jews, and a 1921 book on ‘occult lodges’.³⁴ The latter book made an impression on Himmler, who read it in 1926 and praised it as “a deeply serious work.”³⁵ In the same year, Heise published another anti-masonic and antisemitic article in Alfred Rosenberg’s Nazi periodical *Der Weltkampf*.³⁶ Like his other works, Heise’s 1921 book on ‘occult

völkisch-religiöser Organisationen” 214, 216-17), and Wolfgang Dierker characterizes the Ludendorffers as “occultist” (Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 206); cf. also Amm, *Die Ludendorff-Bewegung*, 107-08, 112-14, 127-30; Poewe, *New Religions and the Nazis*, 161-67; and Schnurbein, *Religion als Kulturkritik*, 123. James Webb describes Mathilde Ludendorff as “a devotee of the occult conspiracy theory” (Webb, *Occult Establishment*, 305) and as a prototypical “manufacturer of conspiracy theories and opponent of occultism who uses all the most extravagant weapons in the occultists’ own armory.” (ibid. 301) In addition to anthroposophy, theosophy, the Mazdaznan movement, and other occult groups, the Ludendorffers attacked the Pope, the Dalai Lama, Christianity, and Communism as part of the far-flung Jewish-masonic conspiracy.

³³ The contribution of both authors to the antisemitic-anti-masonic conspiracy myth is recognized in some of the specialized secondary literature; see Pfahl-Traugher, *Der antisemitisch-antifreimaurerische Verschwörungsmythos*, 25, 31-32, 68-69, 117-18; Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung*, 211-14, 217; Neuberger, *Freimaurerei und Nationalsozialismus*, 76, 86-87, 136, 162, 169-70, 216; and Eduard Gugenberger, Franko Petri, and Roman Schweidlenka, *Weltverschwörungstheorien: Die neue Gefahr von rechts* (Vienna: Deuticke, 1998), 88-89, 98, 112, 120.

³⁴ Heise, *Entente-Freimaurerei und Weltkrieg*, and Heise, *Okkultes Logentum*. I discuss the first book, and Steiner’s role in its inception, in chapter 2. For a précis of its argument see the unsigned article “Der Zusammenhang von Okkultismus, Freimaurerei und Weltkrieg” *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* May 1919, 433-37. The *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* (published by Max Altmann, one of the major theosophical publishing houses) also published the original version of Heise’s *Okkultes Logentum* as a six-part series of articles in 1920 and 1921; see Heise, “Okkultes Logentum” *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* December 1920 through April 1921; it is the opening article in each issue.

³⁵ See Josef Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler als Ideologe* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1970), 34. Himmler praised the book in his journal as “eine tieferrnste Schrift.” In light of Himmler’s esteem for Heise’s *Okkultes Logentum*, it is worth noting that the book extols Steiner and his teachings unreservedly and quotes extensively from other anthroposophist authors.

³⁶ Karl Heise, “Der rote Faden in der Freimaurerpolitik der Gegenwart” *Der Weltkampf* May 1926, 1-10; Heise’s article is immediately followed by an article by Rosenberg elaborating the same argument.

lodges' excoriates freemasons, occultists, Jesuits and Jews in Britain, France, Russia and America for attempting to destroy Germany, and gives particular emphasis to the notion of an occult-Jewish-masonic-Bolshevik conspiracy, while praising the true and healthy German occultism represented by Rudolf Steiner. This line of argument was in an important sense a continuation and specification of Steiner's own teachings. Thus from an early stage, anthroposophical themes figured prominently in the volatile mix of ideas that eventually, in Nazi hands, came to be turned against anthroposophy and other varieties of occultism. Through Heise, these same ideas helped shape Himmler's conception of National Socialism as an eternal struggle against Jews and Freemasons, which then became the guiding principle of the SD's persecution of anthroposophists and other occultists.³⁷

Perhaps Heise's more direct legacy, however, was as mentor to Schwartz-Bostunitsch, a Russian émigré to Germany who was a committed anthroposophist throughout much of the 1920s.³⁸ 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

As in his earlier writings, Heise here cites and highly recommends the work of anthroposophical conspiracy theorist Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz.

³⁷ On Himmler's view see Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 38-39, 125, and Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 204-07, 223-27. On Himmler's interest in Heise's work see also Webb, *Occult Establishment*, 318, and Wegener, *Heinrich Himmler*, 51-55, 111-12, 115-16.

³⁸ An excellent concise biographical portrait is available in Michael Hagemeyer, "Das Leben des Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch" in Karl Schlögel, ed., *Die Russische Emigration in Deutschland 1918 bis 1941* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 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* vol. 4 no. 12 (1929), 333-38. A helpful overview in English can be found in Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, 169-71; cf. also Webb, *Occult Establishment*, 266-67. Walter Laqueur, *Russia and Germany* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1990), 134-37 also provides an overview of Schwartz-Bostunitsch's career. Laqueur overestimates Schwartz-Bostunitsch's standing within the SD and SS; on 136 he writes: "By the late thirties Bostunitich was one of the leading SS experts on the Jewish question and the highest authority for the anti-masonic struggle." Schwartz-Bostunitsch was an aggressive and vocal antisemite, but was never an acknowledged SS expert on the 'Jewish question,' and by the late 1930s even his anti-masonic works had fallen into disrepute among his erstwhile SD colleagues. His major publication is Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, *Die Freimaurerei: Ihr Ursprung, ihre Geheimnisse, ihr Wirken* (Weimar: Duncker, 1928), originally published in a Russian-language edition in Serbia in 1922.

turned sharply against Steiner and anthroposophy.³⁹ Schwartz-Bostunitsch dedicated his 1928 magnum opus *Die Freimaurerei* to Heise, whom he considered his teacher and to whom he was particularly devoted.⁴⁰ Like Heise, Schwartz-Bostunitsch combined antisemitic and anti-Communist motifs, was involved in ariosophical circles, and collaborated with Rosenberg's *Weltkampf* as well. His active participation in the Nazi movement overlapped substantially with his anthroposophical period: he began as a public speaker for the Nazi party in Bavaria in 1923, met Himmler in 1924 and Hitler in 1925, and was officially named an NSDAP *Reichsredner*, a high-profile speaker for the party, in 1927.⁴¹

Schwartz-Bostunitsch's break with anthroposophy was sudden and surprising, and above all severe. His published works from 1928 still had high praise for Steiner, and in July 1928 he described himself as "the only one of the *völkisch* writers in

³⁹ On Schwartz-Bostunitsch's early Theosophical membership see Hagemeister, "Das Leben des Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch" 209; Hagemeister also discusses Schwartz-Bostunitsch's strong interest in the occult before the Russian revolution. Hagemeister, 210, reports that Schwartz-Bostunitsch specifically endorsed "the occult racial doctrine of the Theosophists" in the 1922 original Russian-language edition of *Die Freimaurerei*. The 1922 book appears to have been critical of Steiner. Hagemeister surveys Schwartz-Bostunitsch's anthroposophical period on 212-13. 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 and anthroposophy in 1922, shortly after the publication of the Russian text, and turned against anthroposophy in 1929. See the June 1934 circular "Für die Zweigleiter der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft-Deutschland: Beitrag zur Gegnerbekämpfung" signed by Poppelbaum (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 317).

⁴⁰ See Hagemeister, "Das Leben des Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch" 212 on Schwartz-Bostunitsch's reverential attitude toward Heise. For Heise's own reminiscence of his relationship with Schwartz-Bostunitsch after their falling out, emphasizing the latter's previous intense devotion to Steiner and anthroposophy and his extensive contributions to the anthroposophical movement, see Karl Heise to Karl Heyer, July 7, 1930 (BA R58/6188/2: 481-483).

⁴¹ Hagemeister, "Das Leben des Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch" 211. Schwartz-Bostunitsch wrote for the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the flagship Nazi newspaper, from 1925 onward. On some occasions Schwartz-Bostunitsch claimed he had begun working with the Nazi party as early as 1922; see e.g. Schwartz-Bostunitsch to Reichspropagandaleitung der NSDAP, April 30, 1932 (BA OPG/I93: 1242). On other occasions he dated his initial involvement with the Nazis to 1924; see e.g. Schwartz-Bostunitsch, "Lebenslauf" 1939 (BA RK/B207: 1914). In addition to his speaking and writing on behalf of the party, Schwartz-Bostunitsch also appeared as an expert witness for the NSDAP in an antisemitic 'ritual murder' trial in 1928.

Germany who is not joining in the idiotic agitation against Dr. Steiner.”⁴² By June 1929, however, he turned on Steiner and his movement, and in 1930 published a pamphlet attacking Steiner in extremely harsh terms as an occult swindler and a false prophet.⁴³ Heise decided that his former friend and follower must have been “possessed by demons.”⁴⁴ Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s Nazi career continued apace, now as a fervent opponent of anthroposophy rather than an anthroposophist; he joined the Nazi party and the SS in December 1931.⁴⁵ His attacks on anthroposophy became increasingly scurrilous, and extended into the late 1930s.⁴⁶

The official anthroposophist response to Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s polemics was telling. In reacting to his denunciations, the Anthroposophical Society in Germany aligned itself with the Nazi regime and tried to portray Schwartz-Bostunitsch as a danger to Germany. Initial anthroposophist replies to his about-face derided the

⁴² Schwartz-Bostunitsch to Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, Dornach, July 2, 1928 (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 318). In the 1928 German edition of *Die Freimaurerei* he still wrote very admiringly of Steiner, and he quoted Steiner positively in an article on “völkisch occultism” published in an ariosophical journal in 1929. See Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, “Völkischer Okkultismus” *Ariosophie* 4 (1929), 345-50; reference to Steiner on 348; see also the editorial footnote by Herbert Reichstein distancing the journal from anthroposophy. In the same article Schwartz-Bostunitsch praised Heise’s book *Okkultes Logentum*.

⁴³ Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, *Doktor Steiner - ein Schwindler wie keiner: Ein Kapitel über Anthroposophie und die geistige Verwirrungsarbeit der ‘Falschen Propheten’* (Munich: Deutscher Volksverlag, 1930). Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 42, dates the 32 page pamphlet to June 1929, but the foreword by Schwartz-Bostunitsch is dated March 1930. Werner’s discussion of Schwartz-Bostunitsch is partially misleading, and downplays the duration and extent of his anthroposophical involvement. The June 1929 dating of the break with anthroposophy, however, is confirmed by Heise’s June 8, 1929 letter to Schwartz-Bostunitsch (BA R58/6188: 476-479), which also provides valuable background on the nature of their six-year association as anthroposophists.

⁴⁴ Karl Heise, letter from April 7, 1934, recounting his break with Schwartz-Bostunitsch, whom Heise now considers “dämonisch besessen” (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 319). Heise, a member of the Anthroposophical Society since 1916, remained an anthroposophist. See also the correspondence between Heise and anthroposophist Karl Heyer regarding Schwartz-Bostunitsch in BA R58/6188/2: 390-528. Based in part on this material, Heyer provides a tendentious but generally accurate account of Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s about-face in *Wie man gegen Rudolf Steiner kämpft*, 90-96.

⁴⁵ See Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s SS file, BA SSO/121B: 592-865, and his *Oberstes Parteigericht* file, BA OPG/I93: 1231-1280. The official date of both his party membership and his SS membership is December 1, 1931. Schwartz-Bostunitsch had evidently attempted to join the party at an earlier date.

⁴⁶ Among many examples see the collection of “Amtliche Briefe an Schwartz-Bostunitsch” in the SD sub-file titled “Freimaurer” (BA R58/6305a) and the accompanying correspondence in BA R58/6305b, as well as Schwartz-Bostunitsch to Gruppenführer Wolff, August 17, 1938 (BA R58/5737b: 412).

Russian author as “anti-German” and a “hack writer.”⁴⁷ An internal document distributed by the Anthroposophical Society leadership in June 1934, meant to help anthroposophists counter the various charges from Schwartz-Bostunitsch circulating in the press, began by noting that these charges had started to influence official decisions, something which “was only possible because the German government organs and party organs, in the colossal surge of their work of construction and defense [*in dem gewaltigen Andrang der Aufbau- und Abwehrarbeit*], were not able to concern themselves with details such as anthroposophy.”⁴⁸ The document suggests that, in the eyes of the German anthroposophist leadership in June 1934, as expressed in an internal forum, the problem was not National Socialism, nor the new regime, nor even its *Abwehrarbeit*, but rather the malicious writings of a conspiratorially inclined former anthroposophist. The document goes on to claim that Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s pre-anthroposophical works were “aimed against Germany” and dedicated to a “pan-Slavic world mission,” and concludes by dismissing him as an “un-German scribbler.” Another internal anthroposophist document referred to Schwartz-Bostunitsch as a “sinister Russian.”⁴⁹ In 1931, anthroposophists also entertained the notion that he was a Bolshevik and a Jew.⁵⁰ Schwartz-Bostunitsch, for his part, feared that anthroposophist members of the Nazi party were intriguing against him.⁵¹

⁴⁷ June 1934 circular “Für die Zweigleiter der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft-Deutschland: Beitrag zur Gegnerbekämpfung” from the Leitung der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland, signed by Poppelbaum (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 317-319).

⁴⁸ Ibid. The 1934 circular on “Gegnerbekämpfung” is entirely about Schwartz-Bostunitsch.

⁴⁹ Sekretariat am Goetheanum, Dornach, to Alfred Reebstein, Anthroposophical Society in Germany, January 11, 1934, describing Schwartz-Bostunitsch as “dieser ominöse Russe” (BA R58/6193/2: 420).

⁵⁰ See the correspondence between Karl Heyer and Fritz Rascher in BA R58/6188/2: 390-394. For anthroposophist efforts from 1930, 1931 and 1932 to persuade Hitler and other leading Nazis of the virtues of anthroposophy, see the correspondence of Karl Heyer, Oskar Franz Wienert, Baron Tucher and Georg Klenk in BA R58/5946: 1429-1471.

⁵¹ On Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s fears that anthroposophist Nazis were maneuvering to hinder his advance within the party, see his March 28, 1934 notice (BA R58/6191/2: 670) and his handwritten memorandum from November 23, 1934 (BA R58/6191/2: 543). Schwartz-Bostunitsch was convinced that “the anthroposophists have the *Gauleitung* [regional Nazi party leadership] of Baden completely in their hands” and were also in control of the regional office of the Ministry of Propaganda; see his July 16, 1934 SD *Meldung* titled “Anthroposophie” (BA R58/6186: 162).

By 1933 Schwartz-Bostunitsch was no longer a mere anti-masonic author and agitator. He had become a protégé of Himmler, and began working for the SD in 1934.⁵² At SD headquarters in Berlin he served as a *Gegnerforschung* specialist on freemasonry, producing a lengthy paper trail of internal analyses and memoranda.⁵³ Many of these reports concerned the extravagant evils of anthroposophy and theosophy.⁵⁴ But Schwartz-Bostunitsch did not last long at the SD; he was forcibly retired by Heydrich in January 1937.⁵⁵ Even in the overwrought atmosphere of Nazi ‘research on ideological enemies,’ his fanatical pursuit of freemasons, Bolsheviks, and Jews concealed behind occult masks was considered crude and excessive, and the SD eventually repudiated his work.⁵⁶ By time of the 1941 “Campaign against occult

⁵² The various SS and party files on Schwartz-Bostunitsch provide divergent dates for the start of his SD employment. According to BA PK/L164: 336, he was assigned to the SD on June 1, 1934, whereas his SS file says April 10, 1935 (BA SSO/121B: 754). The latter date is incompatible with the surviving SD documents, which show Schwartz-Bostunitsch working for the SD from at least mid-1934. Schwartz-Bostunitsch himself, in his 1939 “Lebenslauf,” gave the date as March 7, 1934: “Vom 7.3.34 bis 30.1.37 hauptamtlich im SD-Hauptamt tätig.” (BA RK/B207: 1914) By October 1934 he was in charge of the SD’s freemasonry division; see the October 10, 1934 Interior Ministry memorandum on the struggle against masonic lodges, BA R58/6020/2: 626.

⁵³ On Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s SD career see Browder, *Hitler’s Enforcers*, 119, 189, 216; Melzer, *Konflikt und Anpassung*, 181-82, 284; Neuberger, *Winkelmaß und Hakenkreuz*, 198-200, 319-22, 373-74.

⁵⁴ See e.g. the 1934 sub-file titled “Verbände. Logenähnlich. Theosophen.” from the SD-Hauptamt (BA R58/6197/1: 248-60), and Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s May 8, 1934 *Meldung* on anthroposophy (BA R58/6195/2: 512-515); cf. also BA R58/6193/2: 362 and BA R58/6191/2: 573.

⁵⁵ See Heydrich’s order from January 21, 1937, declaring that Schwartz-Bostunitsch is no longer fit to work for the SD (BA SSO/121B: 748). For context see Hagemeyer, “Das Leben des Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch” 215.

⁵⁶ See the withering internal SD report from November 3, 1938, a scathingly critical analysis of Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s book *Die Freimaurerei* prepared by SS officer Hans Richter; he says the book is full of errors and falsehoods, is bound to mislead the public, and is indeed “downright dangerous” (BA R58/6144/2: 162-164). Richter emphasizes that Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s approach to freemasonry is directly contrary to the SD’s “serious educational efforts.” In 1939 and 1940, Richter was head of RSHA Amt II B 1, “Freimaurer,” the *Gegnerforschung* section on freemasonry (Geschäftsverteilungsplan des RSHA, BA R58/840: 169, 214). See also the negative SD assessment of Schwartz-Bostunitsch from 1942: RSHA to RFSS Persönlicher Stab, April 18, 1942, reiterating that from the perspective of the SD and RSHA, Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s views on freemasonry remain incommensurable with their own work, and explicitly noting that they now reject his SD reports from 1935 (BA SSO/121B: 638-640). Heise’s work was occasionally referred to positively in SD documents; see e.g. “Die Grundlagen der Theosophie” from 1936 or 1937, which cites Heise’s *Okkultes Logentum* as a source (BA R58/6199/3: 332, 359), but cf. 366, characterizing Heise disapprovingly as an “Illuminat und Anthroposoph.”

doctrines and so-called occult sciences” Schwartz-Bostunitsch no longer played an active role.⁵⁷ The importance of figures such as Heise and Schwartz-Bostunitsch lies primarily in contributing to the ideological groundwork upon which the SD’s efforts were based. The idea of ‘occult lodges’ became central to Nazi harassment of esoteric groups.⁵⁸

Because they were considered para-masonic or “lodge-like organizations” (*logenähnliche Vereinigungen*), a lengthy series of theosophical, anthroposophical, and other occult groups were banned in the course of the 1930s, and former members of these organizations faced severe restrictions in civil service employment, party membership, and other areas.⁵⁹ Most of the masonic lodges themselves had been

⁵⁷ Himmler remained on friendly terms with Schwartz-Bostunitsch, and indeed continued to promote him within the SS; in 1944 he was made an SS-Standartenführer, the equivalent of an army colonel. See also the collegial 1937 correspondence between Schwartz-Bostunitsch and Gestapo freemasonry specialist Karl Haselbacher: BA R58/6193/1: 356-358. Neuberger, *Winkelmaß und Hakenkreuz*, 322, 373-4, emphasizes that SD analysts looked askance at Schwartz-Bostunitsch and his work, and highlights the SS leadership’s distancing from him. Cf. Hagemeyer, “Das Leben des Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch” 216, and Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher*, 152-53.

⁵⁸ In yet another combination of standard SD enemy images, quite a few occult groups fell under the hybrid category of “freemasonic, occultist and spiritualist sects.” For one example see the undated list titled “Freimaurerische, okkultistische und spiritistische Sekten” (BA R58/5713/2: 551) containing 31 different organizations. Both these groups and the officially designated “*völkisch* religious groups” were under the oversight of the same SD officer, Walter Kolrep; see e.g. the consecutive department summary documents “II 1134: Sektenwesen” (listing three sub-categories: “Jüdisch-christliche Sekten,” “freimaurerisch gebundene, okkultistische und spiritistische Sekten,” and “außerchristliche Sekten”) and “II 1135: Völkisch-religiöse Gruppen” (BA R58/5691: 462-464), both under Kolrep. For a representative instance of an occult group facing harassment from Nazi agencies due to its ostensible masonic connections, see Heydrich’s order for strict supervision of the *Naturphilosophischer Verein von Gralsanhängern*, a small association of Grail mystics: Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt an alle Staatspolizeistellen, November 15, 1934 (BA R58/405: 7), which reads in part: “Die Gralsbewegung gehört zu denjenigen internationalen okkulten Verbänden, deren Betätigung im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland im Hinblick auf ihre freimaurerischen Bindungen möglichst zu unterbinden ist.”

⁵⁹ See Heydrich’s July 20, 1937 order regarding “Auflösung freimaurerlogenähnlicher Organisationen” (BA R5101/23856: 161-164) listing several dozen “lodge-like organizations” that are to be dissolved, and noting that the Anthroposophical Society, the Mazdaznan movement, the Order of Druids and the Odd Fellows Order have already been dissolved. See also the “Richtlinien der NSDAP für die Behandlung ehemaliger Angehöriger von Logen und logenähnlichen Organisationen” (BA R58/6144/1: 5-6) and the January 1937 notice “Betr.: Zugehörigkeit von Beamten zu Freimaurerlogen, anderen Logen oder logenähnlichen Organisationen” (BA R58/6187: 47-48). The Gestapo specialist for ‘lodge-like organizations’ was a *Regierungsoberinspektor* named Wöhrn (BA R58/840: 140). For further information on the SD and Gestapo campaign against ‘lodge-like organizations’ see Neuberger, *Winkelmaß und Hakenkreuz*, 273-80. According to Neuberger, such classifications were for the most part completely groundless, as the minuscule groups in question generally had no connections whatsoever to actual freemasonry.

disbanded during the first two years of the Nazi regime, and the remaining ones were dissolved by decree in August 1935.⁶⁰ The SD obsession with freemasonry, expressed in a variety of publications and internal educational programs,⁶¹ offered a reliable point of reference whenever troublesome esoteric tendencies came under official scrutiny.⁶² Other occult groups, meanwhile, were banned as unwanted sects. Harsh measures were employed against numerous non-occult organizations as well, either because they were suspected of masonic connections, or because they were classified as minority religious sects. Many such groups were anything but hostile to National Socialist principles.⁶³

⁶⁰ Melzer, *Konflikt und Anpassung*, 180; a number of 'lodge-like organizations' were dissolved at the same time. Melzer also notes (283) that a 1936 decree from the Ministry of the Interior regarding the previous masonic membership of civil servants listed 33 officially designated "lodge-like organizations" including the Theosophical Society, the Anthroposophical Society, the Odd Fellows, The Order of Druids, and others.

⁶¹ For examples of SD publications on the topic see Hans Richter, "Freimaurerei in der Abwehr" *Volk im Werden* September 1938, 436-42; Dieter Schwarz, *Die Freimaurerei: Weltanschauung, Organisation und Politik* (Berlin: Eher, 1938), with foreword by Heydrich ("Dieter Schwarz" was a collective pseudonym for SD specialists in 'research on ideological enemies'); Franz Alfred Six, *Studien zur Geistesgeschichte der Freimaurerei* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1942); and the July 1939 special issue on freemasonry of *Der Schulungsbrief: Das zentrale Monatsblatt der NSDAP*, including the opening essay by Heydrich, "Kampf der Freimaurerei," as well as an unsigned article titled "Logen und Nationalsozialismus: Abwehrmaßnahmen der NSDAP" (267-70), describing masonry as a tool of the Jews, of the West, of liberalism, pacifism, and internationalism, as an enemy of Fascism and National Socialism, and as incompatible with Nazi racial doctrine. The issue also includes an article on "freimaurerähnliche Organisationen" titled "Winkellogen" (281-82), which briefly mentions "the Theosophical Societies, the Anthroposophical Society and the Mazdaznan movement" (282). On SD presentations and courses on freemasonry as 'ideological enemy' in the late 1930s see Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher*, 116.

⁶² On the SD's anti-masonic fixation see Aronson, *Reinhard Heydrich und die Frühgeschichte von SD und Gestapo*, 202, 205, 227, 269; Browder, *Hitler's Enforcers*, 35-36, 125-26, 188-89; Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher*, 149-57; as well as Pfahl-Traugher, *Der antisemitisch-antifreimaurerische Verschwörungsmythos in der Weimarer Republik und im NS-Staat*, Neuberger, *Winkelmaß und Hakenkreuz*, and Melzer, *Konflikt und Anpassung*.

⁶³ This lengthy list includes the Pan-German League, the Thule Society, the *Germanenorden*, several Nordic and Aryan groups, and a variety of religious organizations, neo-pagan and otherwise, founded by active and prominent Nazis. See e.g. the February 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: 456-459) including the German Faith Movement, the Ludendorff movement, the Reventlow-*Reichswart* circle, the Ariosophical Society, Artur Dinter's *Deutsche Volkskirche*, the *Germanenorden*, the *Nordisch-aryische Glaubensgemeinschaft*, and the *Deutsche Loge zur Armanenschaft*. The *Deutsch-Völkische Bruderschaft* was designated a "lodge-like organization" (BA R58/405: 77; see also BA R58/6106a/2). The Thule Society was progressively diminished and dissolved in 1935-37 (BA R58/6177). The *Kampfbund für Germanische Weltanschauung* was banned in October 1933 (BA R58/405: 80). Other

In light of this extensive record of persecution of the most disparate occult groups, it is tempting to conclude that the Nazi authorities as such were unremittingly hostile to any and all forms of organized occultism, and that the Gestapo simply carried out and enforced the consensus decision of all major Nazi agencies. This was by no means the case. The SD and the Gestapo formed the institutional nucleus of the anti-esoteric faction within the Nazi movement, and were acutely aware of the resistance they faced from other components 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, and extending the general logic of the struggle against ‘ideological enemies of National Socialism,’ the SD analysts who oversaw the anti-occult campaign consistently applied the same set of criteria, and the 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, and aloofness from the *Volksgemeinschaft* or national community, as well as promoting heterodox views on race, views allegedly incompatible with and intolerable to a genuinely National Socialist perspective. In the eyes of the SD, as guardians of the ideological purity of the Nazi movement, such claims amounted to the ultimate charge of defying the Nazi state.⁶⁴ In this way, dozens of alternative spiritual groups and occult

groups under Gestapo surveillance included the *Deutschnationale Front*, the *Jungdeutscher Orden*, various *Freikorpsverbände*, etc. (BA R58/840: 159).

⁶⁴ Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 201, provides a useful summary of this process, which extended not only to supposedly para-masonic organizations but to all minority religious groupings. “Nach Überzeugung des SD waren die meisten kleinen Religionsgemeinschaften nach der Machtübernahme zu Sammelbecken von Staatsfeinden wie Kommunisten und Freimaurern geworden.” Dierker goes on to list the specific charges: international connections, pacifism, distance from the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and failure to accept Nazi racial doctrine, among others. This collection of supposedly suspicious attributes made such groups appear to be “Gegner des Regimes”: “Vor diesem Hintergrund sah der Sicherheitsdienst im weit überwiegenden Teil des ‘Sektenwesens’ eine Gefahr für den NS-Staat und forderte seine ‘restlose Vernichtung’.” The SD applied this same schema to anthroposophy and other occult groups, as well as to dozens of other alternative spiritual tendencies which otherwise had nothing in common. Whether the charges were actually true in any given instance made no difference to the eventual outcome.

associations were eliminated from public life and officially banished from the Third Reich.

The SD and Gestapo devoted impressive efforts to investigating, controlling, curtailing and dismantling these organizations. Some of them were banned before the November 1935 order dissolving the Anthroposophical Society; these include the “Association for Occult Science” in Augsburg (*Verein für okkulte Wissenschaft*, dissolved in March 1935 due to its “lodge-like character”)⁶⁵; the spiritualist Weissenberg sect, banned in January 1935⁶⁶; an occult group called the “League of Fighters for Faith and Truth” (*Bund der Kämpfer für Glaube und Wahrheit*, banned in August 1935)⁶⁷; and the esoteric Mazdaznan movement, dissolved a week before the Anthroposophical Society.⁶⁸ Others were banned in 1936 and 1937, including the

⁶⁵ BA R58/6106a/1: 10. The group had a total of 28 members.

⁶⁶ 1939 “Aufstellung der bisher verbotenen Sekten” (BA R58/5713/1: 253-254). Founded by Joseph Weissenberg in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Weissenberg sect’s approach to spiritual healing emphasized *völkisch* elements and German nationalism, and included some theosophical components. By the 1930s its membership numbered in the tens of thousands. The group exists today under the name *Johannische Kirche*. For background see Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 159, 223, 226; King, *Nazi State and the New Religions*, 237; and above all Linse, *Geisterseher und Wunderwirker*, 91-211; for an informative contemporary critical account see Rudolf Olden, “Märkische Reinkarnation: Weissenberg, der göttliche Meister” in Olden, ed., *Das Wunderbare oder die Verzauberten*, 21-36. For context on the 1935 suppression of the sect see Linse, *Geisterseher und Wunderwirker*, 164-74. Weissenberg himself was imprisoned from 1935 to 1937.

⁶⁷ June 7, 1939 “Verzeichnis der seit 1933 verbotenen Sekten” prepared by the Gestapo (BA R58/405: 80-84). A full English translation of this document appears as “List of sects prohibited by the Gestapo up to December 1938” in Conway, *Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 370-74. For background on the *Bund der Kämpfer für Glaube und Wahrheit* see Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 195-96, 229-30; and Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1665.

⁶⁸ The Ministry of the Interior declared the Mazdaznan movement *staatsfeindlich* on October 9, 1935, and the group was dissolved on November 5, 1935 (BA R58/6194/1: 240). For the text of the Gestapo ban, designating the Mazdaznan movement as internationalist, freemasonic and pacifist, see BA R43II/149: 38. Mazdaznan was an important occult tendency that combined vegetarianism and Aryan supremacy and had members in Germany, Switzerland, the United States and elsewhere. The anthroposophist Karl Heise was actively involved in the Mazdaznan movement. Founded in the US in the 1890s and established in Germany in 1908, Mazdaznan propounded a religion of racial regeneration, of revitalized Aryan blood and of Germanic rebirth and renewal; it opposed racial mixing, preached a new Aryan race of the future and a return to old Aryan values, displayed a strong *Lebensreform* emphasis, and was influenced by theosophy. For background see Ulrich Linse, “Mazdaznan – die Rassenreligion vom arischen Friedensreich” in Schnurbein and Ulbricht, *Völkische Religion und Krisen der Moderne*, 268-91; Linse, “Mazdaznan” in Baer, ed., *Lexikon neureligiöser Gruppen*, 774-78; Green, *Mountain of Truth*, 98-99, 235; Wedemeyer-Kolwe, “Der neue Mensch”, 153-64. For primary sources see Otoman Hanish, *Mazdaznan-Rassenlehre* (Leipzig: Mazdaznan, 1933); Hanish, *Mazdaznan: Science*

Gottesbund Tanatra and a Gnostic sect dissolved in July 1936⁶⁹, the “Study Circle for Psychic Research” prohibited in January 1937⁷⁰, and the “New Salem movement” banned in May 1937.⁷¹

Perhaps the most significant series of anti-occult measures in this period were the closures of various theosophical organizations, including several that had long since adopted a stridently pro-Nazi stance and had Nazi party members in their leadership. The two principal examples were the “Theosophical Brotherhood” founded by Hermann Rudolph in Leipzig, and the Theosophical Society, also based in Leipzig, headed by Hugo Vollrath.⁷² Both groups competed vigorously with one another for the favor of Nazi officials, presented their own version of theosophy as the appropriate vehicle for the spiritual renewal of the German nation, and greeted the dawn of the Third Reich and the advent of Hitler with great enthusiasm. A further important figure in this regard was Johannes Maria Verweyen, General Secretary of the German Section of the Theosophical Society Adyar from 1928 to 1935.⁷³ In 1934 Verweyen attempted a synthesis between theosophy and Nazism, emphasizing their

of *Eugenics* (London: British Mazdaznan Association, 1937); David Ammann, *Die vorgeburtliche Erziehung: Der Weg zur Veredelung der Rasse* (Leipzig: Mazdaznan-Verlag, 1914); Ammann, *Die Rasse der Zukunft und Rassenhygiene* (Leipzig: Mazdaznan-Verlag, 1914). On the back-and-forth over Nazi policy toward Mazdaznan in the course of 1933-35 see Fritzen, *Gesünder Leben*, 66-67; Fritzen notes that the Gestapo shut down Mazdaznan in its regional stronghold, Saxony, in July 1935. The movement still exists; for a critical overview of the current Mazdaznan milieu see Klaus Bellmund and Kaarel Siniveer, *Kulte, Führer, Lichtgestalten: Esoterik als Mittel rechtsradikaler Propaganda* (Munich: Knaur, 1997), 227-52.

⁶⁹ BA R58/405: 57. On the *Gottesbund Tanatra* see Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 53, 229-30; King, *Nazi State and the New Religions*, 236; Webb, *Occult Establishment*, 32-35.

⁷⁰ Conway, *Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 372.

⁷¹ “Aufstellung der bisher verbotenen Sekten” BA R58/5713/1: 253-254. The SD considered the New Salem movement “neo-theosophical” (BA R5101/23856). According to King, *Nazi State and the New Religions*, 235, the group combined “Gnostic, spiritualist and UFO interests.”

⁷² A detailed account of the history of both organizations during the Nazi era can be found in the unpublished master’s thesis by Bernadett Bigalke, “Zur Theosophie in Leipzig in den Dreißiger Jahren: Die Leipziger theosophischen Vereine am Ende der Weimarer Republik und zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus” (Universität Leipzig, 2002).

⁷³ For a nuanced assessment see Helmut Zander, “Johannes Maria Verweyen (1883-1945) als Theosoph” *Gaesoncker Blätter* 7 (2005), 37-70, as well as Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 198-200 and 209-18.

commonalities.⁷⁴ In 1933 he defended Nazi Jewish policy against criticism from non-German theosophists, arguing that “the so-called persecution of the Jews [in Germany] is in reality a persecution of socialism and communism,” and portraying Nazi measures as “a response to the persecution of non-Jews by Jews, to the predominance of Jews in theater, literature, commerce, and so forth.”⁷⁵ Verweyen’s efforts to appease the new regime were fruitless, and his Theosophical Society was banned in July 1937. Verweyen himself was arrested in June 1941 and died of typhus in Bergen-Belsen in March 1945.⁷⁶

Rudolph and Vollrath were even more aggressive in establishing a strongly pro-Nazi version of theosophy. In 1933 Vollrath’s Theosophical Society declared Hitler’s new order to be “the will of God,” and Vollrath himself had been a member of the Nazi party since 1931.⁷⁷ As late as 1936, Vollrath still preached the full compatibility of theosophy and National Socialism and boasted of his own contribution to integrating the theosophical movement into the Nazi state. In a letter to Heydrich, he even proposed establishing a “department for theosophy, mysticism and related areas” in the *Reichskulturkammer*, the Nazi cultural apparatus.⁷⁸ Rudolph’s

⁷⁴ Johannes Maria Verweyen, *Nationalsozialismus und Theosophie* (Düsseldorf: Ring-Verlag, 1934), based on his speech at the Theosophical Society’s annual meeting in May 1934. Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 234-38, portrays Verweyen as a pacifist and anti-fascist, and does not mention his pro-Nazi statements.

⁷⁵ Quotations from Verweyen’s 1933 article “Zur Frage der Adyar-Gesellschaft” in Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 210.

⁷⁶ The SD summary report prior to his 1941 arrest can be found in BA R58/6287b/1: 251. Although Verweyen returned to Catholicism in 1936, the SD continued to regard him as a theosophist and took a sharply critical view of his work; examples include “Die Grundlagen der Theosophie” (BA R58/6199/3: 312-399), and the June 1936 SD report on “Zersetzung der nationalsozialistischen Grundwerte im deutschsprachigen Schrifttum seit 1933” (BA R58/5959), 3-4.

⁷⁷ On Vollrath’s party membership see his March 19, 1936 statement to the Leipzig police, BA R58/6199/2: 509.

⁷⁸ Vollrath to Heydrich, April 3, 1936, on letterhead of Theosophical Society, Leipzig (BA R58/6199/2: 476-487). The 12 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. Vollrath also boasts of his own role in the *Gleichschaltung* of theosophy into the NSDAP, and fulminates against the Jesuits and against Ernst Röhm and his followers. On Vollrath’s Theosophical Society during the Nazi era see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 326-31; by the mid-1930s, the group may have existed largely on paper.

“Theosophical Brotherhood” in a sense went further still, portraying theosophy as the fullest expression of Nazism’s true goals and apotheosizing National Socialism as the glorious next step in spiritual evolution.⁷⁹ Rudolph’s 1933 and 1934 publications promoted the religious mission of the German *Volk* to unify the Aryan peoples, and characterized the Theosophical Brotherhood as “the partner of the National Socialist movement in the spiritual sphere.”⁸⁰ Indeed according to Rudolph, “theosophical doctrines provide the ideological and religious foundation of National Socialism.”⁸¹

Such effusive proclamations of support for Nazism did not mollify the SD and Gestapo agents entrusted with ‘research on ideological enemies of National Socialism.’ On the contrary, both Rudolph’s Theosophical Brotherhood and Vollrath’s Theosophical Society provoked a particularly ruthless response from these officials.⁸² Vollrath’s Theosophical Society was under surveillance from 1934 onward, and in February 1935 the Gestapo ordered Rudolph’s publications confiscated and banned.⁸³ The SD saw these groups as especially dangerous precisely because of their outspokenly pro-Nazi stance, and their writings were taken as further evidence that

⁷⁹ See above all Hermann Rudolph, *Nationalsozialismus und Theosophie* (Leipzig: Theosophischer Kultur-Verlag, 1933). Cf. Rudolph, *Die deutsche Sendung der Theosophischen Verbrüderung*, Leipzig, October 1934, and Rudolph, *Die Theosophische Verbrüderung: Die arische Religion, ihr Wesen und ihre Prinzipien*, Leipzig 1933. On Rudolph’s Theosophical Brotherhood during the Nazi era see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 308-17.

⁸⁰ Hermann Rudolph, *Die Deutsche Theosophische Gesellschaft: Ihr deutscher Charakter und ihre deutsche Sendung – Eine Aufklärungsschrift*, Leipzig, September 1933. Copies of several Theosophical Brotherhood pamphlets from 1933 and 1934 can be found in BA R58/6198/2. For an example of Rudolph’s work before the Nazi accession to power see Hermann Rudolph, *Deutschlands Aufstieg: Des deutschen Volkes sittliche und religiöse Wiedergeburt, der Weg ins neue Zeitalter* (Leipzig: Theosophischer Kultur-Verlag, 1931).

⁸¹ *Die Theosophische Verbrüderung: Was verkünden die theosophischen Vorträge?* January 1934 (BA R58/6198/2). See also Hermann Rudolph, “Die Theosophische Verbrüderung und der Nationalsozialismus” April 14, 1933 (BA R58/6201/4: 855-857). The SD was unimpressed, dismissing his brochure *Nationalsozialismus und Theosophie* in a November 22, 1934 report as “internationale, weltbürgerliche, sektiererische und aufklärerische Menschheitsduselei” (BA R58/6197/1: 235-236).

⁸² See e.g. Himmler to Heydrich, April 17, 1936, ordering the Gestapo to pursue the Theosophical Brotherhood ruthlessly (“aufs schärfste und unnachgiebigste zu verfolgen”): BA R58/6199/1: 230.

⁸³ See the detailed reports in BA R58/6200/1 and BA R58/6200/2.

theosophists were covert internationalists, pacifists, freemasons and Bolsheviks.⁸⁴ By attempting to mix their own doctrines with Nazi teachings, above all on “the race question,” theosophists such as Vollrath and Rudolph directly threatened the ideological integrity of National Socialism. Both groups were dissolved in July 1937 as ‘lodge-like organizations,’ and Rudolph was temporarily arrested in October of that year.⁸⁵ He and Vollrath faced additional detention in the June 1941 anti-occult actions.

A similar fate befell the *Deutsche Neugeistbewegung*, the German offshoot of the New Thought movement. The *Neugeistbewegung* began as a split-off from the Theosophical Society and exemplified the conjunction of occult and *Lebensreform* themes. Although the group was emphatically pro-Nazi and its leadership made up largely of party members, it was spurned not only by the SD but even by the official Nazi *Lebensreform* organizations.⁸⁶ It was expelled from the authorized *Lebensreform* association in 1934.⁸⁷ The SD categorized the movement as an occultist sect and kept close tabs on its publications.⁸⁸ Some *Gegnerforschung* agents also considered it a

⁸⁴ For examples see the thoroughly negative April 1936 Gestapo report on Vollrath and his group (BA R58/6199/2: 512-524); the discussion of Vollrath’s works in the SD report “Die Grundlagen der Theosophie” (BA R58/6199/3: 312-399, 377-8, etc.); the analysis of Rudolph’s writings in the SD document “Übersicht über einige Theosophische Vereinigungen und Gesellschaften und deren Verbindungen zur Freimaurerei und anderen Geheimorden” (BA R58/6197/1: 248-260; the document is unsigned and undated, but an attached note is signed by Schwartz-Bostunitsch and dated September 21, 1934); and the 1936 Gestapo report on the Theosophical Brotherhood and the Theosophischer Kultur-Verlag (BA R58/6198/2: 290-342). The arguments in these reports frequently seem strained; several of them rely on extensive quotations from Vollrath’s or Rudolph’s texts, passages which show their authors to be convinced adherents of National Socialism, yet the SD and Gestapo specialists cite them as evidence of the very opposite.

⁸⁵ See Werner Best’s October 8, 1937 order that Rudolph be taken into ‘protective custody’ (BA R58/6201: 947).

⁸⁶ Wolfgang Krabbe, “Die Weltanschauung der Deutschen Lebensreformbewegung ist der Nationalsozialismus’: Zur Gleichschaltung einer Alternativströmung im Dritten Reich” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 71 (1989), 431-61.

⁸⁷ The report on the “Arbeitstagung des Sachverständigenbeirats für Volksgesundheit” in *Der Heilpraktiker* April 1934, 10-16, announced that Nazi *Lebensreform* officials had expelled the *Neugeistbewegung* from their ranks. For background on the group see Andreas Fincke, “Neugeist-Bewegung” in Baer, ed., *Lexikon neureligiöser Gruppen*, 870-72; Wedemeyer-Kolwe, “Der neue Mensch”, 164-74; and Glowka, *Deutsche Okkultgruppen*, 119-22.

⁸⁸ BA R58/7560: 64 lists the *Neugeistbewegung* (along with theosophy, anthroposophy, ariosophy, and Mazdaznan) under “Weltanschauliche Sekten.” SD analysts regularly read the movement’s periodical,

front for freemasonry.⁸⁹ Like the Mazdaznan movement, the *Neugeistbewegung* was deemed a competitor to, rather than an ally of, Nazi efforts to appropriate and assimilate alternative spiritual tendencies. In 1938 the SD prepared to ban the group.⁹⁰

With even ardently pro-Nazi theosophists and esotericists encountering utter rejection from the SD and Gestapo, the situation for the occult milieu as a whole looked bleak indeed by the late 1930s. An internal SD document from June 1938 indicates that the anti-esoteric tendency within the Nazi movement hoped to achieve a complete ban on all occult groups in Berlin by the end of the year, and that plans were underway to extend such a ban throughout the Reich soon after that.⁹¹ While the ideological justifications for a sweeping strike against organized occultism are made manifest in the SD's files, the underlying institutional motives for this crusade are difficult to discern with precision from the available evidence. In line with existing research on the development of the Nazi security services, a possible explanation suggests itself: In the absence of systematic political opposition to Nazism, and since direct confrontation with the domestic mainstream churches had been subordinated, on Hitler's orders, to foreign policy goals, the SD had to prove itself through the

Die weiße Fahne; see "Dienstanweisung für das Sachgebiet II 1133 (Sekten)" BA R58/5713/1: 153-161. *Die weiße Fahne* was published from 1920 until 1941.

⁸⁹ The 1934 "Übersicht über einige Theosophische Vereinigungen und Gesellschaften und deren Verbindungen zur Freimaurerei und anderen Geheimorden" condemned the *Neugeistbewegung* as covert freemasons (BA R58/6197/1: 257). Kolrep's analysis of "Das Sektenwesen" (BA R58/5713/1: 232-234) included the *Neugeistbewegung* (as well as Mazdaznan, the *Gottesbund Tanatra*, and the *Bund der Kämpfer für Glaube und Wahrheit*) in the category of "freimaurerisch-spiritistisch beeinflusste Gruppen," all of which were slated for elimination.

⁹⁰ SD document on "Okkultistische und spiritistische Sekten," June 20, 1938 (BA R58/6074: 119).

⁹¹ June 20, 1938 internal SD document, authored by Hermann Kluckhohn, titled "Arbeitsplan der Sachgebiete: 'Völkisch-religiöse Gruppen' sowie 'Okkultistische und spiritistische Sekten, Astrologie'." (BA R58/6074: 116-119) Similar expectations can be found in other SD documents; the "Übersicht über einige Theosophische Vereinigungen und Gesellschaften und deren Verbindungen zur Freimaurerei und anderen Geheimorden" recommends a comprehensive ban on all theosophical groups, activities, and publications, because "theosophy stands in total contradiction to National Socialism." (BA R58/6197/1: 260) For an indication of the importance the SD attached to theosophical currents overall, see the undated list of occult periodicals from SD holdings in BA R58/6501/1; it includes 33 German theosophical periodicals, 16 French theosophical periodicals, 37 English theosophical periodicals, and 29 theosophical periodicals in other languages.

identification and elimination of new and ever more insidious internal enemies, and secure the German nation against the rising occult tide.

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. Many of the chief theosophical, anthroposophical, and occult organizations had been suppressed, but others continued to operate, and the guardians against 'ideological enemies' saw themselves stymied and unable to eradicate the remaining threat. In fact by early 1939, SD officials found themselves on the defensive and viewed the struggle against occult groups as a losing battle.⁹² A large part of the reason for this dim assessment of their own chances is that the anti-esoteric faction ensconced in the SD and Gestapo recognized that they faced influential adversaries in other parts of the Nazi hierarchy.⁹³ They knew that Hess and his staff, Baeumler in the *Amt Rosenberg*,

⁹² Two pertinent examples from the office of Albert Hartl, SD specialist in religion, underscore this sentiment: the 11 page February 6, 1939 "Vermerk: Betr.: Anthroposophie" (BA R58/6193/1: 205-215), and the related internal SD outline regarding the course of the campaign against anthroposophy (BA R58/6193/1: 198). Both documents summarize past SD successes in restricting anthroposophist activities and repressing anthroposophist organizations, but note with evident frustration that anthroposophists and their supporters have managed to circumvent, suspend or reverse many of these measures. After a thorough review of current negotiations over the legal status of various anthroposophist projects, the reports conclude that the effort to abolish anthroposophy has so far failed, and that anthroposophists seem likely to re-establish their public activities in full. The "Zusammenfassung" of the first document begins: "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, bio-dynamic agriculture, the Christian Community, and eurythmy enterprises. It ends: "Andererseits haben sich gerade in der letzten Zeit die Versuche auffällig gehäuft, eine Rehabilitierung sowohl der einzelnen ehemaligen Anthroposophen als auch des anthroposophischen Schrifttums und damit der anthroposophischen Lehre überhaupt zu erreichen." For anthroposophical perspectives on the same question see Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 242-97.

⁹³ This was still the case in 1941. See the SD list of "Überzeugte Anhänger der Anthroposophen" (BA R58/5563: 59) and the related list of leading anthroposophists and their sympathizers (BA R58/5563: 35); the materials sent from the SD-Leitabschnitt Berlin to RSHA Amt IV on May 16, 1941, including a list titled "Mit den Anthroposophen sympathisieren:" followed by ten names of Nazi officials, beginning with Minister of Agriculture Darré (BA R58/5563: 39); and the May 22, 1941 report from Hartl's office on "Maßnahmen gegen Okkultisten, Astrologen, Kurpfuscher u. dgl." (BA R58/6197/1: 13-17), which says that occultists found support from a range of high Nazi officials, including Baeumler in the Amt Rosenberg, Hess and his staff, Karl Heinz Hederich, head of the Parteiamtliche Prüfungskommission zum Schutze des nationalsozialistischen Schrifttums, and Darré. SD specialists on 'ideological enemies' also viewed Lotar Eickhoff in the Interior Ministry and SD division head Otto

and Ohlendorf in the SD itself were willing to intervene on behalf of anthroposophical endeavors in particular. Himmler, meanwhile, maintained his ambiguous stance, sponsoring and sheltering some occult projects while allowing or ordering others to be persecuted.

These intra-Nazi rivalries are essential to understanding the timing of the June 1941 anti-occult campaign. Since 1940, wide-ranging preparations had been in progress for ‘Operation Barbarossa,’ the invasion of the Soviet Union, and the SD was intimately involved in the process of planning and preparing for the surprise invasion and subsequent occupation.⁹⁴ Military dynamics may have played a role in encouraging anti-occultist Nazis, as part of the larger anti-religious faction within the SD, to seize this opportunity for a move against their preferred targets. 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 in April, and thus ride a wave of popular support for the Nazi regime before the beginning of the next armed adventure.⁹⁵

The crucial incident, however, in setting off the chain of events that led to the “Campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences” was the unexpected

Ohlendorf as supporters of anthroposophy. For this assessment of Ohlendorf by the anti-occult faction in 1940, see e.g. BA R58/6187: 3; for this view of Eickhoff in 1939 see BA R58/6193/1: 207.

⁹⁴ On SD involvement in planning for Barbarossa see Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges: Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, 1938-1942* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1981), 107-72; Gerd Ueberschär and Wolfram Wette, eds., *“Unternehmen Barbarossa”: Der deutsche Überfall auf die Sowjetunion 1941* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1984), 108-09; Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord: Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941-1943* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), 41-113; for a helpful overview of the general planning and preparation for the invasion see Johannes Hürter, *Hitlers Heerführer: Die deutschen Oberbefehlshaber im Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1941/42* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2006), 205-65.

⁹⁵ Conway, *Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 259. Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 525-26, also notes the radicalization of SD measures against ‘sects’ after the outbreak of the war. The hard-line SD grouping aimed to eliminate all independent religious life from Nazi Germany eventually, including the mainstream churches; for one version of this goal see the 1937 SD “Arbeitsplan” reprinted by Wolfgang Dierker in Joachim Kuropka, ed., *Geistliche und Gestapo: Klerus zwischen Staatsallmacht und kirchlicher Hierarchie* (Münster: Lit, 2005), 86-91. For background on the SD’s religion policy see Gerhard Besier, *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2001), 167-285.

flight of Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess to Britain on May 10, 1941.⁹⁶ Hess seems to have hoped to arrange a separate peace with the British in advance of the coming war on the Eastern front, and flew alone and unannounced on a quixotic mission without Hitler's knowledge or approval. 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 plausible and face-saving explanation commenced, along with the usual jockeying for position and power among Hess's former colleagues and competitors.⁹⁷ The incident provided an unforeseen opportunity for Martin Bormann in particular, who had heretofore been Hess's chief of staff and whose longstanding ties to the SD were a distinct advantage in responding quickly to the Hess crisis.⁹⁸ 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; Hess did have a history of personal and public interest in a variety of esoteric approaches, above all in health care and nutrition.⁹⁹ The claim put forth in the aftermath of the flight, however, was that Hess had taken his errant step under occult influence. Astrologers, and in some versions of the story

⁹⁶ For background on Hess's flight see Schmidt, *Rudolf Heß*; Pätzold and Weißbecker, *Rudolf Heß*, 252-68; and David Stafford, ed., *Flight from Reality: Rudolf Hess and his Mission to Scotland* (London: Random House, 2002). The latter book is an especially effective antidote to the myriad conspiracy theories surrounding the event.

⁹⁷ For an overview see Pätzold and Weißbecker, *Rudolf Heß*, 283-90.

⁹⁸ On Bormann's excellent relationship with the SD see Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 163-64, 302-05. For background see Peter Longerich, *Hitlers Stellvertreter: Führung der Partei und Kontrolle des Staatsapparates durch den Stab Heß und die Partei-Kanzlei Bormann* (Munich: Saur, 1992).

⁹⁹ Pätzold and Weißbecker, *Rudolf Heß*, 25, report that as a young man Hess had no significant interest in the occult. Other scholars have documented the mature Hess's occult predilections; see e.g. Longerich, *Hitlers Stellvertreter*, 111-13; Schmidt, *Rudolf Heß*, 44, 46, 170; Webb, *Occult Establishment*, 307-08, 325; Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 159, 213-17; Proctor, *Nazi War on Cancer*, 256-57; Joachim Fest, *Das Gesicht des Dritten Reiches* (Munich: Piper, 1993), 263-64. In 1927 Hess reportedly sought funding to establish a "Zentralinstitut für den Okkultismus": Helmut Heiber, *Walter Frank und sein Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1966), 806.

anthroposophists, were said to have deranged or manipulated the Deputy Führer through nefarious occult means.¹⁰⁰ This claim contained elements of truth – Hess heeded both astrological and anthroposophical precepts in his personal life¹⁰¹ – but mostly served as a convenient rationalization of the embarrassing episode, as well as a pretext for a final settling of accounts by Bormann and his allies with the occultists they despised.¹⁰² In part as a result of this explanation for Hess’s seemingly

¹⁰⁰ The links between anthroposophy and astrology were not coincidental. For a contemporary anthroposophist account see Elise Wolfram, *Fixsternhimmel und Menschheit* (Breslau: Ullrich, 1940), and for a latter-day anthroposophist perspective see Elisabeth Vreede, *Anthroposophy and Astrology* (Great Barrington: Anthroposophic Press, 2001); for general historical context see Kocku von Stuckrad, *Geschichte der Astrologie: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 2003), and S.J. Tester, *A History of Western Astrology* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1987). Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich*, 78, observes: “The origins of the modern German astrological movement are to be found close to the Theosophical Society in the 1880s.” On the extensive overlap among theosophical, ariosophical, and astrological circles see Heinrich Eppe, “Blut und Sterne: Völkischer Rassismus und Astrologie vor 1918” in Gerhard Kern and Lee Traynor, eds., *Die esoterische Verführung* (Aschaffenburg: IBDK Verlag, 1995), 115-28, and cf. Helmut Groschwitz, “‘...der verkümmerte Überrest alten Wissens.’ Völkische Wissenschaftskonstruktionen in astrologischen Kalendern der 1920er und 1930er Jahre” *Jahrbuch für Europäische Ethnologie* 2007, 35-44.

¹⁰¹ According to Peter Longerich, Hess was “profoundly interested in astrology, anthroposophy, the occult and related areas” (Longerich, “Hitler’s Deputy: The Role of Rudolf Hess in the Nazi Regime” in Stafford, ed., *Flight from Reality*, 114). Walter Wuttke-Groneberg refers to Hess’s “anthroposophical background”: Wuttke-Groneberg, “Nationalsozialistische Medizin,” 33. On Hess’s strictly biodynamic diet see Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 171; cf. Speer, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1969), 133-34. In November 1939, Alfred Rosenberg noted the astrologers around Hess; see Rosenberg, *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs*, 89: “Heilkundige aller Art umgaben ihn. Astrologen, Pendler, waren in seiner Umgebung.” Other first-hand memoirs confirm Hess’s occult inclinations; see e.g. Ernst Hanfstaengl, *Zwischen Weißem und Braunem Haus: Memoiren eines politischen Außenseiters* (Munich: Piper, 1970), 324. Goebbels, for his part, remarked that the letters Hess left behind explaining his decision were “overflowing with half-baked occultism.” (Elke Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels* vol. 9 (Munich: Saur, 1998), 311, entry from May 14, 1941: “Seine Briefe strotzen von einem unausgegorenen Okkultismus.”) For further background on Hess’s longstanding interest in astrology, mysticism, and the occult, see Schellenberg, *Schellenberg Memoirs*, 199-202. Schellenberg also reports that the SD considered Hess a “silent patron and supporter of the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner.” Walter Schellenberg, *Memoiren* (Cologne: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1959), 160. Hess told the British doctor who examined him after his flight “that he had for years been interested in Steiner’s anthroposophy.” J.R. Rees, *The Case of Rudolf Hess* (London: Heinemann, 1947), 35.

¹⁰² In the view of former Nazi counter-intelligence chief Walter Schellenberg, much of the backlash after Hess’s flight involved Bormann’s intrigues to take over Hess’s key position; see Schellenberg, *Schellenberg Memoirs*, 202-03; cf. Lang, *Der Sekretär*, 162-89. 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 himself blamed Hess’s flight on “the claque of astrologers Hess kept around himself and allowed to influence him. It is time to do away with this stargazing nonsense once and for all.” Hans Frank, *Im Angesicht des Galgens* (Munich: Beck, 1953), 411. Frank presents the passage as a direct quote from Hitler: “dem astrologischen Klüngel, den Heß um sich in Einfluß hielt. Es ist daher Zeit, mit diesem Sterndeuterunfug radikal aufzuräumen.” Goebbels viewed

inexplicable actions, astrologers and anthroposophists came to be central targets in the anti-occult campaign.¹⁰³

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.¹⁰⁴ Hauer had been a critical analyst of anthroposophy since the early 1920s, initially in a scholarly mode, shifting to a denunciatory approach in 1934, when he began to collaborate with the SD in its efforts to discredit the anthroposophical movement.¹⁰⁵ In the course of pursuing ostensible 'ideological enemies' of National Socialism, Hauer also pursued his own religious goals, centered on a mixture of Nordic, neo-pagan and 'Indo-Germanic' elements. He was the founder of the German Faith Movement (*Deutsche Glaubensbewegung*), and tried to rally the

the Hess crisis as an opportunity to put occultists behind bars and eliminate occultism completely, writing on May 16, 1941: "Ich gebe einen scharfen Erlaß gegen Okkultismus, Hellscherei etc. heraus. Diese [sic] ganze obskure Schwindel wird nun endgültig ausgerottet. Die Wundermänner, Heß' Lieblinge, werden hinter Schloß und Riegel gesetzt." Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels* vol. 9, 315.

¹⁰³ There are indications that Bormann planned an anti-astrology drive before Hess's flight; see Bormann's May 7, 1941 circular to the *Gauleiter* concerning "Aberglaube, Wunderglaube und Astrologie als Mittel staatsfeindlicher Propaganda" and warning against "occult circles" attempting to confuse the people: Bormann, Rundschreiben an alle Gauleiter, streng vertraulich!, May 7, 1941 (BA NS8/185: 81-83). Extensive detail on astrology in Nazi Germany both before and after June 1941 can be found the chapter "German Astrologers and the Third Reich" in Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich*, 104-19, and *passim*.

¹⁰⁴ Biographical background on Hauer is available in Fritz Heinrich, *Die deutsche Religionswissenschaft und der Nationalsozialismus* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2002), 296-329; see also 165-66 on Hauer's early critiques of anthroposophy. The biography by Margarete Dierks, *Jakob Wilhelm Hauer 1881-1962: Leben, Werk, Wirkung* (Heidelberg : Schneider, 1986), is to be used with caution. Dierks was a Ludendorffer in the 1930s and a Nazi party member in the 1940s and gained her doctorate with an antisemitic dissertation on the 'Jewish problem'; she met Hauer after 1945 through the *völkisch* religious milieu, and her biography of him is thoroughly apologetic. The best study of Hauer, and particularly his relationship to anthroposophy, is Junginger, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft*. For further context see Hiroshi Kubota, *Religionswissenschaftliche Religiosität und Religionsgründung: Jakob Wilhelm Hauer im Kontext des Freien Protestantismus* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2005).

¹⁰⁵ Hauer's earlier publications include J. W. Hauer, *Werden und Wesen der Anthroposophie: Eine Wertung und eine Kritik* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1922), and Hauer, "Die Anthroposophie als Weg zum Geist" *Die Tat* February 1921, 801-824. For Steiner's indignant comments on Hauer from 1921 see Rudolf Steiner, *Die Verantwortung des Menschen für die Weltentwicklung durch seinen geistigen Zusammenhang mit dem Erdplaneten und der Sternenwelt* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1989), 213. On anthroposophist criticisms of Hauer from the mid-1920s, see Dierks, *Jakob Wilhelm Hauer*, 551-52.

disparate *völkisch* religious factions under his leadership. Hauer engaged in constant polemics against various spiritual tendencies other than his own in an attempt to establish the hegemony of his idiosyncratic version of Aryan religious renewal.¹⁰⁶ The attempt failed; in August 1935 Heydrich forbade Hauer from leading public meetings, and the German Faith Movement ran afoul of the SD.¹⁰⁷ Hauer's affiliation with the intelligence agency apparently remained tense in the late 1930s.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, his extravagant denunciations of other spiritual movements, and of other Nazis, grew ever more shrill.¹⁰⁹

By 1941, Hauer's views on anthroposophy had degenerated into a mixture of paranoia and belligerence, while retaining traces of the detailed research from his earlier academic analyses. Despite his troubled relationship with the SD, he embraced the opportunity provided by the Hess crisis to position himself as an expert on

¹⁰⁶ Three book-length studies of Hauer's German Faith Movement are available: Poewe, *New Religions and the Nazis*; 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). Each makes only passing reference to Hauer's views on anthroposophy. See also Hubert Cancik, "Neuheiden und totaler Staat: Völkische Religion am Ende der Weimarer Republik" in Cancik, ed., *Religions- und Geistesgeschichte der Weimarer Republik*, 176-212; Hans Buchheim, *Glaubenskrise im Dritten Reich: Drei Kapitel nationalsozialistischer Religionspolitik* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1953), 157-202; and Karla Poewe and Irving Hexham, "Jakob Wilhelm Hauer's New Religion and National Socialism" *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 20 (2005), 195-215. For Hauer's own presentation of his movement in English translation see Wilhelm 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; other remarks in the same journal on Hauer and the German Faith Movement are more critical.

¹⁰⁷ For SD and Gestapo suspicions toward Hauer and his movement see among others the June 20, 1938 "Arbeitsplan der Sachgebiete: 'Völkisch-religiöse Gruppen' sowie 'Okkultistische und spiritistische Sekten, Astrologie'" (BA R58/6074: 116-119); Haselbacher's February 11, 1935 order for surveillance of the Deutsche Glaubensbewegung (BA R58/405: 16); and undated SD document marked "II 1135 = Völkisch-religiöse Gruppen" (BA R58/5713/2: 456-459); cf. BA R58/7410 and BA R58/405: 298. The SD also tried to instrumentalize the German Faith Movement as part of a broader effort to undermine the established churches.

¹⁰⁸ Further context on SD surveillance of Hauer's German Faith Movement is available in Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 206-08, and cf. 157-59. For an overview of Nazi attitudes toward Hauer's movement see Conway, *Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 105-10. Further context on Hauer's troubled relationship with the SD is available in Junginger, ed., *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*, 152-54.

¹⁰⁹ Junginger, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft*, 142-82, provides extensive examples.

anthroposophist iniquity. In the days immediately following Hess's flight to Britain, Hauer wrote three lengthy letters to Himmler insisting that Hess was "a victim of anthroposophy."¹¹⁰ Offering his expertise in the final offensive against anthroposophy, Hauer once again joined the SD in tracking down the culprits, and even before the June 9 actions he held a lecture on "Occultism and its dangers for the Reich" for Nazi cadre in Württemberg.¹¹¹ 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, for Hauer anthroposophy represented "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."¹¹² Hauer, an indologist by training, had initially approached anthroposophy as a possible contributor to spiritual regeneration, but came to see it as a competitor to be eliminated.¹¹³ Aside from promoting the notion that Hess had fallen prey to the occult

¹¹⁰ Hauer's May 1941 letters to Himmler can be found in BA R58/6194/2: 10-15. The text of the second May 13 letter is reprinted in Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 411-12.

¹¹¹ See Hauer's June 7, 1941 letter to SD supervisor Albert Hartl (BA R58/6194/2: 9), reporting: "Gestern hielt ich einen Vortrag vor den Schulungsleitern des Gau's Württemberg über 'Okkultismus und seine Gefahren für das Reich' (davon schrieb ich Ihnen schon)." The letter urges strict measures against the Christian Community, and claims that the anthroposophical movement's headquarters in Dornach, Switzerland are under "Jewish influence" and serve as a "center of espionage" against Germany.

¹¹² 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.

¹¹³ Junginger, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft*, 197, writes: "Obwohl Hauer als einer der stärksten Kritiker der Anthroposophie in Erscheinung trat, sah er in der Anthroposophie zunächst eine geistesverwandte Bewegung, die von einem ähnlichen Grundanliegen ausging wie er selbst, nämlich eine Antwort auf die geistige Verödung des Industriezeitalters mit all den damit zusammenhängenden negativen Begleiterscheinungen zu finden." This changed as Hauer's own religious ambitions grew: "Aus der Anthroposophie als vermeintliche Mitstreiterin im Kampf für eine Vergeistigung des Lebens wird somit sehr schnell eine Konkurrentin, die es zu bekämpfen gilt." (198) Poewe, *New Religions and the Nazis*, 4, confirms much of this account, noting that Hauer was initially sympathetic toward anthroposophy while disagreeing with significant elements in Steiner's system; in the early 1920s "Hauer saw anthroposophy as the beginning of a new era, an epoch of new and powerful intellectual and spiritual creation." Dierks, *Jakob Wilhelm Hauer*, 231, reports that in the 1930s the Ludendorffers considered Hauer close to anthroposophy, and she compares Hauer's cosmology to Steiner's, with special reference to Hauer's spiritual conception of race (273). Junginger, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft*, 175, confirms that Hauer rejected the

machinations of devious anthroposophists, Hauer's degree of practical influence over the course of the 1941 anti-occult campaign is difficult to gauge. His role may have been primarily that of providing information and ideas to Heydrich's staff.¹¹⁴

Whatever its origins, the connection posited between Hess's flight and astrologers and anthroposophists had immediate and severe repercussions for senior members of Hess's staff.¹¹⁵ His adjutant Alfred Leitgen, who had done so much to protect and promote anthroposophist endeavors, was arrested the day after Hess's flight. Leitgen was expelled from the Nazi party, interned in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp for several years, and then sent to fight on the Eastern front.¹¹⁶ Similar punishment was meted out to Leitgen's colleague Ernst Schulte-Strathaus,

“biologistisch-materialistische Verengung des Rassebegriffs” and insisted on the “seelisch-geistige Dimension” of race.

¹¹⁴ Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 301-09, attributes a large measure of responsibility to Hauer. Junginger, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft*, 204-13, provides a more nuanced view. Two aspects of Junginger's account suggest that even his comparatively modest conclusion about the level of Hauer's influence may be somewhat overstated. Junginger relies extensively on archival sources written before 1945 by Hauer himself, who seems to have inflated his own role in the matter in order to impress Nazi officials. Junginger's analysis is also concerned to counter Margarete Dierks' apologia for Hauer, which strenuously denies that Hauer participated in the 1941 campaign at all (see Dierks, *Jakob Wilhelm Hauer*, 327-28). Thus Junginger's claim that Hauer was a “driving force” in the 1941 events (208), and played a role comparable to that of Himmler, Heydrich and Hartl (213), may be exaggerated.

¹¹⁵ The conspiratorial narrative concocted by Bormann and the SD about Hess's manipulation by occultists was matched by anthroposophist beliefs about conspiracies against Hess on the part of hard-line Nazis opposed to Hess's supportive stance toward anthroposophy. For one such notion, that Hess was the victim of an attack by radical Nazis in early 1936, and thus that Hess's pro-anthroposophical line was replaced by Bormann's anti-anthroposophical line during this period, see the excerpts from the April 1936 correspondence between Alfred Heidenreich and Friedrich Rittelmeyer in Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. IV, 31.

¹¹⁶ Stafford, ed., *Flight from Reality*, 146, reports that Leitgen was first imprisoned at Sachsenhausen and then sent to the Eastern front in 1942; Schellenberg, *Schellenberg Memoirs*, 202, says that Leitgen remained in a concentration camp until the end of the war. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 115 and 335, reports that Leitgen remained in Sachsenhausen until autumn 1944 and was then assigned to a Waffen-SS probationary unit. On Leitgen's expulsion from the party, see his SA file, BA SA 154-A: 20-31; the expulsion is dated May 12, 1941, but this appears to be an ex post facto dating. Leitgen seems to have remained an SA member; he is listed as “SA-Führer im Stabe der obersten SA-Führung in Berlin” from 1941 to 1944, by which point he was an SA-Obersturmbannführer, and was finally expelled from the SA on March 15, 1944. The only reason given for his SA dismissal is his expulsion from the party three years earlier. 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.

Hess's specialist for occult matters and the other prominent supporter of anthroposophy on the staff of the Deputy Führer. Schulte-Strathaus, an astrologer, was accused of having aided 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 1943.¹¹⁷ Anti-occultist Nazis had looked askance at both Leitgen and Schulte-Strathaus for years, perceiving them (accurately) as important sponsors of anthroposophical activities, and took special umbrage at their purported roles in the Hess affair. They thus became suitable scapegoats for various Nazi factions vying for the upper hand in the wake of Hess's ill-fated flight.¹¹⁸

Because of its close relationship to the Hess debacle, the 1941 campaign against occultism is sometimes referred to as the 'Aktion Hess' in memoirs and

¹¹⁷ Stafford, ed., *Flight from Reality*, 147; Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich*, 194-95; Schmidt, *Rudolf Heß*, 200; Barbian, *Literaturpolitik im Dritten Reich*, 139. On Schulte-Strathaus' expulsion from the party see his file, BA PK/L95: 2785-2866. The date given is once again May 12, 1941, two days after Hess's flight, but the expulsion seems to have taken place later and was post-dated. Along with Leitgen and Schulte-Strathaus, four other members of Hess's staff (Pintsch, Lutz, Platzer, and Sorof) were initially taken into 'protective custody' on Hitler's orders, and later retroactively expelled from the party. The formal expulsion may not have occurred until 1943; see the file of Karl Heinz Pintsch, BA PK/J105: 2343-2370, containing a March 28, 1943 memorandum titled "Ausschluß von Parteimitgliedern" announcing that Leitgen, Schulte-Strathaus, and four other of Hess's adjutants have been expelled from the party "mit Wirkung vom 12. Mai 1941." Both Leitgen and Schulte-Strathaus had been *Reichsamtseleiter* on Hess's staff. Hess's secretaries and chauffeur were arrested as well; see Delarue, *Geschichte der Gestapo*, 265, and Schellenberg, *Schellenberg Memoirs*, 199.

¹¹⁸ Several contemporaneous documents highlight this point. A memorandum from the Amt Rosenberg from late May 1941 titled "Lagebericht auf dem Gebiet des astrologischen Schrifttums" claims that Rosenberg's office had been trying to counter occultist and astrological forces all along, but had been hindered by stronger agencies within the party, pointing in particular to "Kreisen um den Stellvertreter des Führers, an der Spitze Reichsamtseleiter Schulte-Strathaus." (BA NS8/185: 52) A further memorandum from Rosenberg's office rails against Schulte-Strathaus for protecting "den gesamten Bereich des Okkultismus" (BA NS8/185: 65-68). The SD, meanwhile, in a May 22, 1941 memorandum titled "Maßnahmen gegen Okkultisten, Astrologen, Kurpfuscher u. dgl." (BA R58/6197/1: 13-17, *Vermerk* from RSHA IV B 2 (neu), signed by *Gruppenleiter* Hartl and *Hilfsreferent* Stiller), viewed Rosenberg's staff as supporters of occultism, and especially of astrology, while also noting: "Im Stab des Stellvertreters des Führers war es besonders Schulte-Strathaus, der Rudolf Hess für den Okkultismus interessierte" (14). In a May 28, 1941 letter to Bormann, Rosenberg indicated that he saw the Hess crisis as his chance to take back competencies "in Fragen weltanschaulicher Art" that had been stolen from him by Hess's staff, emphasizing his particular opposition to "Astrologen und Okkultisten" and calling for more thoroughgoing measures against them (BA NS8/185: 43-48). See also the correspondence between Himmler and Karl Astel from July and August 1941 in BA NS19/432.

secondary literature.¹¹⁹ This appellation may be somewhat misleading; the SD and Gestapo had been compiling information on occultists for years, and the Hess crisis was in effect merely a welcome opportunity to round up as many of them as possible. The compressed timing of the action did partially compromise its effectiveness, however; Heydrich gave local SD and Gestapo agencies little time to respond to his far-reaching orders.¹²⁰ The initial order for the action 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 throughout the Reich.¹²¹ The June 4 comprehensive order referred specifically to ten different categories of esoteric tendencies, identified as “astrologers, occultists, spiritualists, adherents of occult theories of rays, soothsayers, faith healers, adherents of Christian science, anthroposophy, theosophy, and ariosophy.”¹²² But

¹¹⁹ Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich*, titles his chapter on the 1941 campaign “The ‘Aktion Hess’” (192-203). The memoir by experienced occultist Gerda Walther, who belonged to the anthroposophist Christian Community for a time in the mid-1930s, claims that when taken to jail on June 9, 1941, she saw the official order for her arrest, and that the stated reason was listed simply as “Sonderaktion Rudolf Hess” (Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer*, 591: “Unter ‘Grund der Verhaftung’ stand ‘Sonderaktion Rudolf Hess’.”). Walther also reports that the Gestapo discovered her correspondence with Schulte-Strathaus while searching her home and that this incriminated her in their eyes (474).

¹²⁰ See the responses from local and regional SD offices regarding “Okkultistische Gruppen” (BA R58/5660), replying to Heydrich’s initial request from late May; many of the reports note that they can do little more than collate and submit information from existing records within the time period available.

¹²¹ Heydrich’s order was sent as a *Schnellbrief*, marked “Geheim!”, to all local and regional offices of the Gestapo, the SD, and the *Kripo* or criminal police, with copies sent to all *Gauleiter* and *Regierungspräsidenten* as well as all *Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer*. See *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). The text of the order, without the cover letter to *Gauleiter* and *Regierungspräsidenten*, is reproduced in Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 414-18. An English translation of the document, without the appendix regarding occultist publishers, appears in Conway, *Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 378-82. The order applied to the entire expanded territory of the Reich, including Austria, Alsace-Lorraine, Luxemburg, and the ‘Protectorate’ of Bohemia and Moravia.

¹²² BA R58/1029: 59. Many of the documents surrounding the action indicate that anthroposophy, theosophy, ariosophy and astrology were the chief priorities. For example, the May 22, 1941 SD *Vermerk* regarding “Maßnahmen gegen Okkultisten, Astrologen, Kurpfuscher u. dgl.” refers to “okkultistischen, astrologischen, und anthroposophischen Organisationen” that contribute to “der Verbreitung okkultistischer, astrologischer und anthroposophischer Lehren” (BA R58/6197/1: 16). Himmler’s office log for June 9, 1941 records a meeting with Heydrich to discuss Bormann’s campaign against “Anthroposophie, Theosophie und Ariosophie”: Peter Witte, ed., *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich*

every conceivable variety of occultism was eventually encompassed in the campaign's spotlight; the targeted groups also came to include palm readers, graphologists, mediums, clairvoyants, dowzers, mesmerists, fortune tellers, purveyors of alternative health therapies and various kinds of divination, believers in runes, pendulums, numerology, Grail mysticism, Rosicrucianism, hollow earth theories, and others.

The order for the "Campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences" was preceded by a flurry of preparations within the SD central office, triggered 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."¹²³ 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.¹²⁴ These included arrest and interrogation of leading occultists, confiscation of all 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 procedures for interrogation of individual occultists. Each suspect was to be punished according to their level of participation in esoteric activities, ranging from release on probation with a stern warning and permanent prohibition on future occult

Himmlers 1941-42 (Hamburg: Christians, 1999), 170. The standardized interrogation questions prepared by the SD for the campaign focused particularly on Steiner and anthroposophy.

¹²³ Bormann to Heydrich, May 14, 1941: "Der Führer wünscht, dass mit den schärfsten Mitteln gegen Okkultisten, Astrologen, Kurpfuscher und dergl., die das Volk zur Dummheit und Aberglauben verführen, vorgegangen wird. Ich bitte Sie, zu meinen Händen die Ihrer Meinung nach notwendigen Massnahmen baldigst dem Führer vorzuschlagen." (BA R58/6197/1: 19)

¹²⁴ See the four page proposal from RSHA IV B 2 (neu), May 22, 1941 (BA R58/6197/1: 13-17), referring to their previous *Sofortmaßnahmen* from May 16. In chapter 4 I examine the competing approach proposed by another SD unit under the authority of Otto Ohlendorf (BA R58/6197/1: 19-27), arguing for lenient treatment of anthroposophy while endorsing harsh measures against other occultists. That proposal did not meet with Heydrich's approval.

activities, to internment in a concentration camp. Upon release, all suspects were to be sworn to secrecy regarding the action itself.

The general orders were soon followed by in-depth materials spelling out concrete measures to be implemented, along with information on hundreds of individual suspects. On June 6, Hartl issued a detailed set of instructions for interrogation of arrested occultists.¹²⁵ The eleven-page guidelines contained descriptions of each type of occultist, followed by questions to be asked in each case. A number of the questions indicated the SD's abiding preoccupation with the influence of Steiner's work.¹²⁶ The instructions for dealing with occultist publishers were thorough and 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 such doctrines.¹²⁷ Finally, the SD distributed specific reports on several hundred individuals to be charged with "occult activities," providing details on what those ostensible activities were in each case, as well as recommended penalties for each person arrested.¹²⁸ These files reveal, among other things, that while anthroposophists were in

¹²⁵ 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: 216-227).

¹²⁶ The last of the four types of occultists listed is "theosophists, anthroposophists, and similar groups," but the text for that section (BA R58/5713/1: 225-227) concentrates much more on anthroposophy than on theosophy. Even the lists of questions for the other three types of occultists include 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?"

¹²⁷ See the "Anlage zum Schnellbrief vom 4.6.1941" with instructions on how to proceed against occultist publishers and booksellers (BA R58/1029: 67-70): all copies of every occult publication of any kind are to be immediately confiscated, including inspections of printing shops, bookstores, and warehouses, as well as the business and personal quarters of all occult publishers; correspondence with authors is to be impounded; the stated goal is "the complete elimination of all texts of this kind."

¹²⁸ 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 (some of the targets are not individual persons but organizations); with few exceptions, all are dated June 9, 1941, but appear to have been prepared beforehand. Each page contains basic information on the suspect in question, including addresses and further identifying evidence when available. The nature of their alleged "occult activities" ("okkulte Betätigung") is specified, followed by an "Exekutivvorschlag" or "executive recommendation," as the

the center of the SD's sights, they were supposed to receive relatively mild treatment compared to other occultists.¹²⁹ In the majority of cases, the recommended measures for anthroposophist suspects were house search, interrogation, and police warning, as well as confiscation of correspondence in exceptional circumstances.¹³⁰ A number of other occultists, in contrast, were to be arrested and imprisoned, with some sent to concentration camps.¹³¹ The actual outcome of many of these cases is difficult to

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. Because very few records of the actual arrests and interrogations from the June 1941 action survive (see Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 317), these SD documents, which Werner does not cite, are an invaluable source on the details of the anti-occult campaign.

¹²⁹ Archival sources thus starkly contradict anthroposophical claims that death sentences were considered for leading anthroposophists targeted in the June 1941 action. Rudolf Hauschka's memoir *At the Dawn of a New Age*, 73, claims that death sentences were contemplated for five anthroposophists arrested on June 9, 1941: Erhard Bartsch, Emil Bock, Georg von Sachsen-Altenburg, Elisabeth Klein, and Hauschka himself. According to Hauschka, this fate was averted through the intervention of Otto Ohlendorf on the anthroposophists' behalf.

¹³⁰ For example, anthroposophist Gerhard Hardorp, described as a "leading member of the Christian Community," was to be given a police warning after a house search (BA R58/6287a/1: 301). Hardorp was the pastor of the local Christian Community congregation in Bielefeld. A dozen other "leading members of the Christian Community" scattered throughout the Reich were to receive exactly the same recommended treatment. In another case, Prince Georg von Sachsen-Altenburg, associated with an anthroposophical institute at Schloß Hamborn near Paderborn, was to be taken into custody for an unspecified period (BA R58/6287a/1: 132). For prominent anthroposophist Franz Dreidax, on the other hand, the recommended action was "house arrest for the duration of the investigation" (BA R58/6287/2a: 240). Retrospective first-hand accounts from Christian Community pastors, however, indicate that many of them were arrested on June 9 and jailed for several weeks; see Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. IV, 26-40, and *Flensburger Hefte Sonderheft 8* (1991), 131-45.

¹³¹ One of the harsher examples is Caroline Thun, listed simply as a "Wahrsagerin," a fortune teller or soothsayer; the recommended action in her case is "arrest and transferal to a concentration camp." (BA R58/6287b/1: 233) The occultist publisher Karl Rohm, a fierce critic of anthroposophy, ariosophy, and other competing esoteric doctrines, faced serious penalties as well; along with his employees, he was to be sent to a concentration camp "for a long period of time" and have all of his property confiscated (BA R58/6287/2b: 126). See also the June 1941 records of Gestapo interrogation of former members of the Bund der Kämpfer für Glaube und Wahrheit (BA R58/6074: 446-469). For important comparative context cf. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 311-21, on the experience of high-profile anthroposophists during the June 1941 action, a number of whom, according to Werner's account, received considerably more severe treatment than is reflected in the files examined here, including some cases of imprisonment lasting several months. Werner's portrait may be exaggerated; on the relatively comfortable internment conditions of various anthroposophists see Hauschka, *At the Dawn of a New Age*, 70-73, and Gundhild Kačer-Bock, *Emil Bock: Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1993), 447-58. See also van der Loch, *Anthroposophische Heilanstalten im Dritten Reich*, 99-101, on the fate of anthroposophist Martin Kretschmer, who died of a lung infection in Sachsenhausen in February 1942.

determine, but first-hand testimony is available from a variety of occultists detained on June 9, 1941.¹³² One estimate puts the total number of arrests between 300 and 1000.¹³³

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 to the Christian Community.¹³⁴ With the significant

¹³² See e.g. Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer*, 583-98, and Kersten, *The Kersten Memoirs*, 88-89, as well as Klein, *Begegnungen*, 100-02. Kersten 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. 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). A fairly thorough English summary of her account is available in Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich*, 197-98. For a contemporary anthroposophist report see Jürgen von Grone’s June 19, 1941 letter to a sympathetic *Ministerialrat* named Marotzke in the Prussian *Staatsministerium* (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 34: 9-14), describing house searches of former members of the Anthroposophical Society (albeit not of von Grone himself), confiscation of literature, Gestapo interrogations, and Christian Community pastors placed in investigative custody. Von Grone, a retired military officer, warns that the persecution of anthroposophists will dangerously weaken the German war effort at a crucial time for the fatherland. His letter culminates in the sentence: “Are anthroposophists, whose sons and relatives are fighting on the battlefield, to face the same treatment as the Jews?” (“Sollen etwa Anthroposophen, deren Söhne und Verwandte im Felde stehen, die Behandlung der Juden erfahren?”) See also Jürgen von Grone to Kanzlei Rosenberg, August 6, 1941 (BA NS 15/303: 58261-63). In a June 12, 1941 letter to Darré, biodynamic spokesman Alwin Seifert described actions against participants in the biodynamic movement; the home of anthroposophist Max Karl Schwarz was searched, copies of the biodynamic journal *Demeter* were confiscated, and so forth. Seifert does not mention Hess, and hypothesizes that the chemical industry is behind the actions. (Seifert to Darré, June 12, 1941, BAK N1094 II 1) See also the comparatively well-informed July 5, 1941 letter from Nazi official and biodynamics proponent Franz Zeno Diemer to Darré’s assistant Hermann Reischle, decrying the actions against the biodynamic movement (BAK N1094 II 1).

¹³³ Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich*, 197.

¹³⁴ For local and regional SD reports on anthroposophist undertakings in advance of the June 9 actions, see e.g. the list of “Führende Anthroposophen” submitted by the SD-Leitabschnitt Berlin to RSHA Amt IV on May 15, 1941 (BA R58/5563: 35-38), containing 64 names, mostly activists in the biodynamic movement; SD-Leitabschnitt Stuttgart to RSHA, Amt III, June 6, 1941 (BA R58/5660: 192), denouncing the Christian Community as the organizational successor to the Anthroposophical Society; SD-Abschnitt Neustadt an der Weinstraße, May 31, 1941, section on “Anthroposophen und Theosophen” (BA R58/5660: 11-16), listing nineteen anthroposophist groups in the local area and providing names, dates of birth, addresses, and further information on dozens of individual anthroposophists; SD-Abschnitt Nürnberg, “Betr.: Okkultistische Gruppen” June 1, 1941, “Gruppe F: Anthroposophen und Theosophen” (BA R58/5660: 50); SD-Leitabschnitt Stuttgart to RSHA Amt III C, June 1, 1941, “Betr.: Anthroposophie” (BA R58/5660: 227-230), providing names and addresses of numerous local anthroposophists as well as information on the Waldorf publishing company, the Weleda company, and other anthroposophist institutions, along with membership lists for the Anthroposophical Society in Württemberg, subscriber lists for the *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* and other material. While a number of Christian Community

exception of biodynamic endeavors sponsored by the SS and other Nazi agencies, most of these projects were shut down in the course of the anti-occultist campaign.¹³⁵ Anthroposophist publications were banned, books by Steiner were confiscated, and 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 thorough attention from the SD and Gestapo, who considered it the direct successor to the Anthroposophical Society and suspected that Christian Community representatives had been hiding this supposed institutional relationship all along behind a deceptive façade.¹³⁶ Despite these measures, however, anthroposophist authors continued to write and publish long after June 1941.¹³⁷ In some cases, even active members of the Christian Community, the

representatives were detained and in some cases jailed, few officials of the biodynamic movement were arrested; the two prominent exceptions were Erhard Bartsch and possibly Carl Grund, both of whom went on to work with the SS in its biodynamic endeavors. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 329, citing a post-war anthroposophist memoir, reports that Grund was arrested, but provides no details and no documentation. According to Werner, 328, Bartsch was released in November 1941. A copy of Bartsch's Gestapo interrogation from June 20, 1941 is in BA R58/6223/1: 299-305. For the June 24, 1941 Gestapo interrogation of Hans Merkel, an anthroposophist and high-level biodynamics proponent on Darré's staff, see BA R58/6223/1: 288-297. Apart from this interrogation, Merkel was evidently not detained. In a 1951 letter to a biodynamic colleague, however, Merkel claimed that both he and Bartsch were arrested in the 1941 actions and that he was henceforth forbidden from publishing anything. The letter is misleading regarding Merkel's Nazi affiliations. Merkel to Büttner, November 29, 1951 (BAK N1094 I/2: 81).

¹³⁵ Further exceptions include anthroposophical medicine and the Weleda enterprises, which continued to operate throughout the Nazi era.

¹³⁶ The order prohibiting the Christian Community is dated July 25, 1941 (BA R58/405: 62). See also the 39 page SD report on the Christian Community (BA R58/5563: 110-149); the September 16, 1941 circular to Gestapo and SD leaders, signed by 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 Christian Community 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; see Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. IV, 35-36. The SD was mistaken in believing that the organizational separation between the Christian Community and the Anthroposophical Society was a form of deception; for the history of this institutional distinction and its role within the anthroposophical movement see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1614-52.

¹³⁷ Anthroposophist authors such as 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.

Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture, and the Waldorf movement continued to receive positive political evaluations by various Nazi authorities.¹³⁸

Further esoteric associations were suppressed as well, such as the “League for Spiritual Culture” in Nuremberg, while the Rudolf Hess Hospital in Dresden, which had featured a variety of alternative therapies, was renamed.¹³⁹ Ariosophists were also targeted, including Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, the Austrian founder of ariosophy, and Herbert Reichstein, his foremost German representative.¹⁴⁰ Another ariosophist, Ernst Issberner-Haldane, was arrested in June 1941 and reportedly remained imprisoned until the end of the war.¹⁴¹ Many of the reports submitted in advance of the June 1941 action address ariosophy as one of the more dangerous forms of occultism, and for years before that the SD had often combined ariosophy with theosophical and other

¹³⁸ For example, Eberhard Kurras, a co-founder of the Christian Community and pastor of its Nuremberg congregation, received positive political evaluations from the local Gestapo in October 1941 and from the Gauleitung Franken in November 1941 (BA PK/G400: 2225-48). Unlike the Christian Community publishing house, which was liquidated in July 1941, the chief anthroposophist publisher in Germany, the Verlag Emil Weises Buchhandlung in Dresden, was not shut down until August 1943; see excerpt of August 19, 1943 letter from Dorothea Eymann (widow of the director of the publishing house) to Marta Heimeran in Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. IV, 30.

¹³⁹ On the “Bund für Geisteskultur” in Nuremberg see BA R58/5660: 36-37; both their chairman and vice-chairman were Nazi party members. On the re-naming of the Rudolf Hess Hospital see Schmidt, *Rudolf Heß*, 199-200. The anti-esoteric faction of the SD were suspicious of the hospital’s practices, which in their view derived from occult sources; anthroposophical approaches were a special concern. See e.g. SD-Leitabschnitt Dresden, June 2, 1941, “Rudolf-Heß-Krankenhaus Dresden” (BA R58/6194/2: 22-24), reporting on Alfred Brauchle, head of the department for natural therapies at the hospital, as a supporter of occult activities; according to the report, Brauchle held weekly lectures on biodynamic methods at the hospital. See also Hartl’s claim on May 22, 1941 that Hess himself ordered the hospital to use only biodynamic materials, particularly Weleda and Demeter products (BA R58/6197/1: 15). Alfred Brauchle, *Die Geschichte der Naturheilkunde in Lebensbildern* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1951), 343-52, reviews the history of the natural therapies clinic that he led at the Dresden hospital from 1933 to 1943, but does not mention biodynamic methods. For background on occultist versions of alternative medicine in the Nazi era, as well as efforts to suppress them, see Bothe, *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde 1933 – 1945*, 157-63, 215-16.

¹⁴⁰ 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. Unlike the other SD documents in this file, these two are dated June 12, 1941, rather than June 9, and neither contains an “Exekutivvorschlag”; it is unclear if the two ariosophists were in fact detained.

¹⁴¹ Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich*, 194; see 111-12 for background on Issberner-Haldane.

groups in one amalgamated category.¹⁴² Internal SD analyses of ariosophy harshly dismissed its racial teachings as irreconcilable with National Socialism.¹⁴³ This treatment of ariosophy is particularly striking in light of the broad continuities and commonalities between ariosophical race doctrines and Nazism.¹⁴⁴

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 relatively secure political, economic or military positions protested the crackdown, to little evident effect.¹⁴⁵ Apart from

¹⁴² See e.g. the July 29, 1936 SD memorandum referring to “Theosophie, Mazdaznan, Ariosophie, Astrologie usw.” as targets (BA R58/6201: 47); cf. also BA R58/5994/2: 768-770 and BA R58/6501. For other instances of Nazi hostility to ariosophical thinkers, see e.g. Alfred Rosenberg to Walter Buch, Vorsitzenden des Obersten Parteigerichts, February 6, 1934, sharply criticizing Guido von List as a “schwärmerischer Mann” who led his good *völkisch* readers astray into freemasonry (BA NS8/173: 194-95). A number of Rosenberg’s own racial ideas, for example regarding Atlantis and Aryan origins, displayed significant parallels with ariosophical, theosophical, and anthroposophical doctrines; for brief summary see Webb, *Occult Establishment*, 314-18. On Hitler’s disdain for ariosophy see Mees, “Hitler and *Germanentum*,” 266-69.

¹⁴³ The June 1936 *Monatsbericht* from the SD *Hauptabteilung Presse und Schrifttum*, for example, contains detailed assessments of ariosophy, anthroposophy, and Catholicism; the section on ariosophy (BA R58/64: 45-52) provides a basically accurate summary of ariosophical race doctrine, and then states unequivocally: “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 states: “Die Ariosophen gebärden sich zwar antisemitisch, vergiften aber ihre Anhänger mit jüdischen Anschauungen” (49).

¹⁴⁴ The classic study of ariosophy is Goodrick-Clarke, *Occult Roots of Nazism*. Parallels between ariosophist doctrine and Nazi thought are also explored in detail in Strohm, *Die Gnosis und der Nationalsozialismus*, and in the final chapter of Becker, *Zur Geschichte der Rassenhygiene*. For additional background on ariosophy see Hieronimus, *Lanz von Liebenfels: Eine Bibliographie*; Hunger, *Die Runenkunde im Dritten Reich*, 315-30; Schnurbein, *Religion als Kulturkritik*, 87-115; and Stefanie von Schnurbein, *Göttertröst in Wendezeiten: Neugermanisches Heidentum zwischen New Age und Rechtsradikalismus* (Munich: Claudius, 1993), 61-76. For a comparative portrait see Ulrich Linse’s section “Mazdaznan – Theosophie – Anthroposophie – Ariosophie: ein Vergleich” in Linse, “Mazdaznan,” 279-91.

¹⁴⁵ For examples see anthroposophist Wilhelm Schmudt’s June 15, 1941 letter to the Amt Rosenberg, warning that the current campaign against anthroposophy would destroy “fruchtbarste Keime deutschen Kulturlebens” that are endorsed by “vielen deutschen Volksgenossen” (BA NS 15/303: 58297), as well as Schmudt’s July 19, 1941 letter to Baeumler (BA NS 15/303: 58286-88) and his July 15, 1941 letter to the Staatspolizeileitstelle Königsberg concerning the Christian Community (BA NS 15/303: 58289-96). Schmudt was the chief technician for the power supply of the province of East Prussia, and his brother was Colonel Rudolf Schmudt, Chief Adjutant of the Wehrmacht on Hitler’s staff. See also the materials on Steiner and anthroposophy sent by Jürgen von Grone to the Außenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP in August 1941 (BA NS 15/303: 58261-85).

Hess's staff, the campaign's consequences for high-level Nazi supporters of anthroposophy are disputed, especially in the cases of Darré, Baeumler, and Ohlendorf, all of whom claimed after the war that their efforts on behalf of anthroposophists resulted in re-assignment, demotion, or loss of authority in the aftermath of June 1941.¹⁴⁶ These claims were presented as exculpatory evidence in post-war legal proceedings, and are partly incompatible with the available evidence.¹⁴⁷ The same is true for Alwin Seifert, outspoken defender of biodynamic methods.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ During his 1949 de-Nazification hearings, Baeumler claimed that he was removed from his position as head of the Office of Science in the Amt Rosenberg in 1941 because of his support for anthroposophy and particularly Waldorf schools, and that this step was engineered by Bormann (Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 335; cf. 278). According to Elisabeth Klein, Baeumler became quite enthusiastic about Steiner and anthroposophy after the war, and by the end of his life embraced even those aspects of Steiner's teachings toward which he had previously expressed skepticism; cf. Klein, *Begegnungen*, 93. On Darré see Gerhard, "Richard Walther Darré". Darré's attorney at his 1947 trial in Nuremberg was anthroposophist Hans Merkel, who also worked on Ohlendorf's defense team.

¹⁴⁷ After the war Ohlendorf claimed that he was assigned to command Einsatzgruppe D in retaliation for his support of anthroposophists. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 306 appears to accept this claim, but cf. 335. Other scholars have adopted the claim as well; see e.g. Breitman, *Architect of Genocide*, 288, and David Kitterman, "Otto Ohlendorf" in Ronald Smelser and Enrico Syring, *Die SS: Elite unter dem Totenkopf* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000), 385. Ohlendorf's post-war statements were inconsistent, however; while he generally portrayed his assignment to head the Einsatzgruppe as a form of punishment or an attempt to get rid of him, the details shifted significantly, with Ohlendorf at times depicting Heydrich, Bormann, or Himmler as his nemesis, claims which are in any case at odds with archival sources. See the astutely skeptical analysis by Helmut Krausnick in Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges*, 144-45. Ohlendorf's basic claim that his Einsatzgruppe command was any sort of punishment, or the result of an internal SS intrigue against him, has been systematically dismantled in a detailed examination by Andrej Angrick; see Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, 91-94 and 98-104. For context compare Hilary Earl, *The Nuremberg SS-Einsatzgruppen Trial, 1945-1958: Atrocity, Law, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 46-75, 145-50, 197-210.

¹⁴⁸ A striking indication of this is Bormann's May 16, 1941 circular to all *Reichsleiter*, *Gauleiter* and *Verbandsführer* of the Nazi party, sending all of them a complimentary copy of Seifert's new book *Im Zeitalter des Lebendigen* and recommending it, noting with particular satisfaction the Preface by *Reichsminister* Fritz Todt, Seifert's patron (BA NS8/185: 85). The otherwise negligible incident is genuinely remarkable in the context of the simultaneous actions against perceived sympathizers of anthroposophy and biodynamics: in the midst of a rapidly accelerating campaign against all ostensible supporters of occultism and anything related to it, Bormann, archenemy of anthroposophy, distributes and recommends hundreds of free copies of a book by a prominent and vocal supporter of the biodynamic movement. As explained in chapter 3 above, while some historians consider Seifert an anthroposophist, I think it more accurate to characterize Seifert as a passionate advocate for biodynamics but a skeptic toward other aspects of anthroposophy. The SD, however, viewed Seifert as an anthroposophist; he features prominently, for example, 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 Heydrich ordered that no measures be taken against Seifert: BA R58/6194/2: 170.

Interior Ministry official Lotar Eickhoff, who joined the Anthroposophical Society after the war, does not appear to have experienced negative repercussions from the anti-occult mobilization, nor do prominent sponsors of biodynamics such as Robert Ley, Wilhelm Frick, Nazi *Lebensreform* official Hans Georg Müller, or Nazi Reichstag member Hermann Schneider.¹⁴⁹ In any case, while the campaign largely removed organized occult activities from public view, occultism remained an object of the Nazi struggle against ‘ideological enemies’ even after 1941, with ongoing efforts by the SD and others to keep the esoteric threat at bay.¹⁵⁰

One notable outcome of the June 1941 campaign was a lengthy internal SD report summing up the case against anthroposophy, an anonymous fifty-five page pamphlet titled *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Zweckverbände*, evidently meant for use within the Nazi security services.¹⁵¹ The analysis takes note of several facets of anthroposophy that are ideologically akin to Nazi principles, observing for example

¹⁴⁹ Schneider appears on a May 1941 SD list of “Überzeugte Anhänger der Anthroposophen” (BA R58/5563: 60). I discuss his support for the biodynamic movement in chapter 3.

¹⁵⁰ For examples see the October 26, 1942 memorandum announcing the establishment of a new *Hauptstelle “Okkultismus”* headed by Bernhard Hörmann in the *Hauptamt für Volksgesundheit der NSDAP* (BA NS 18/494; Hörmann was a vigorous supporter of biodynamics in the 1930s); the files on “Agitation gegen Okkultismus und Aberglaube 1941-43” from the office of Kurd Kisshauer in the *Hauptamt Weltanschauliche Information* in the Amt Rosenberg (BA NS 15/399); the 1942 files on occultism from Goebbels’ office (BA NS18/497); the October 1942 “Programm der Arbeitstagung des Amtes VII im RSHA” (BA R58/5959: 440); the detailed reports on Hermann Poppelbaum from RSHA Amt VII in November 1944 (BA R58/6187: 192-193); 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); and the August 1944 correspondence regarding military officers who were former members of the Anthroposophical Society, theosophical groups or other “okkultistischen Richtungen” (BA R58/6189/1: 2). On the July 1941 disagreement between Goebbels and Bormann over public propaganda against occultism see BA NS18/211: 566-569.

¹⁵¹ *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. The main text of the pamphlet is reprinted in Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 423-42; a photographic reproduction of the full pamphlet is available in Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. V, 10-63. Werner tentatively dates the pamphlet to October 1941. For a retrospective anthroposophist response to the pamphlet see Christoph Lindenberg, “Vor 50 Jahren. Anthroposophische Arbeit in Deutschland 1933-1941: Zum Problem der Urteilsbildung” *Die Drei* April 1991, 303-11.

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.”¹⁵² Insisting that anthroposophical race doctrines are incompatible with Nazi precepts, the pamphlet comes to the damning conclusion that despite anthroposophy’s constant privileging of Germanic and *völkisch* elements, it can only lead to the corruption of National Socialist ideals.¹⁵³ Indeed the very fact that anthroposophy does not openly oppose Nazism is what makes it exceptionally dangerous: “Precisely because there is no external appearance of a politically combative position by anthroposophy toward National Socialism, the threat of corruption of National Socialism by anthroposophy is especially great.”¹⁵⁴ Anthroposophy’s function, furthermore, is to prime its sympathizers for “all the other occult teachings,” and thus to “pave the way for all occult doctrines.”¹⁵⁵ The pamphlet concludes that “the adherent of anthroposophy must inevitably become an enemy of National Socialism.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Zweckverbände*, 13-14.

¹⁵³ The first paragraph under the sub-heading “Gegensatz zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Anthroposophie” reads: “Obwohl die Anthroposophen immer wieder ihre völkische Verbundenheit und ihr Eintreten für das Deutschtum zu betonen suchen, muß jedoch eindeutig festgestellt werden, daß eine Verbindung von anthroposophischen Gedankengängen und germanisch-völkischer Weltanschauung unmöglich ist und die Anthroposophie letzten Endes zur Zersetzung der nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung führen muß.” (*Die Anthroposophie und ihre Zweckverbände*, 13) For similar assessments see SD-Leitabschnitt Stuttgart to RSHA, Amt III, June 6, 1941, which calls for pursuing the Christian Community as the successor to the Anthroposophical Society, and declares: “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) See also the June 20, 1938 “Arbeitsplan der Sachgebiete: ‘Völkisch-religiöse Gruppen’ sowie ‘Okkultistische und spiritistische Sekten, Astrologie’” which depicts occult groups, “such as the theosophical and anthroposophical associations,” as a gathering place for enemies of Nazi racial doctrine: “Hier versuchen sie z. T. ihren Bestrebungen ein völkisches Gesicht zu geben und bedeuten damit eine nicht zu unterschätzende Gefahr für die weltanschauliche Gleichrichtung des deutschen Volkes.” (BA R58/6074: 118)

¹⁵⁴ *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Zweckverbände*, 15-16.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 46. A similar analysis can be found in another internal SD document prepared in the wake of the June 1941 actions, J. W. Hauer’s unpublished report on theosophy and anthroposophy, which was apparently completed in October 1941; see the 69 page typescript titled “Theosophie und Anthroposophie” in BA NS 15/404. The second half of the text is reproduced, without attribution to Hauer, in Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol.

This conclusion underscores the SD's misjudgment of the potential danger that anthroposophy and other forms of occultism posed for National Socialism as a movement, as a worldview, and as a regime. From the vantage point of historical hindsight, it may be obvious that occultists were not a genuine threat to the Nazi state, and other Nazi officials may have recognized this at the time. Within the panorama of SD 'research on ideological enemies,' occultism nonetheless loomed large enough to warrant thoroughgoing repressive measures even in the midst of military mobilization. In justifying such measures, SD representatives invoked the usual sequence of ideological infractions: internationalism, pacifism, masonic and/or Jewish connections, and deviation or recalcitrance regarding the "race question."¹⁵⁷ This was the template that SD analysts applied to virtually all minority 'worldview' organizations 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. This interpretation is reinforced by surviving SD assessments of theosophical race doctrines, among

IV, 54-92. According to Junginger, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft*, 209, this essay was part of a longer manuscript titled "Okkultes Sektierertum im Gewand der Philosophie und der Weltverbrüderung"; see 209-11 for context. Even in this text, Hauer expressed a measure of respect for theosophical and anthroposophical thought, noting the spiritual insights of both movements, their contributions to society, their novel perspectives on religion and metaphysics and their efforts to engage with non-European spiritual traditions; "Aber das alles ist vollständig eingesponnen und durchsetzt von verworrenen Ideen." (Hauer, "Theosophie und Anthroposophie" BA NS 15/404: 20)
¹⁵⁷ See e.g. the collection of anti-theosophical memoranda assembled under the overall rubric of "Sektierer als Volksverführer" in BA R58/6201; the texts here attack theosophical conceptions of race and classify theosophists as internationalist, pacifist, masonic, and judeophilic. Helmut Zander's thorough study makes clear that while all the theosophical groups retained at least some form of rhetorical or organizational international connection, the only one that maintained a pacifist and genuinely internationalist position during WWI in particular was a relatively small theosophical offshoot, the German branch of Katherine Tingley's Point Loma tendency; see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1681, and cf. 259-65.

others.¹⁵⁸ In many cases, the charge of allegedly heterodox racial views is difficult to reconcile with the stated principles of the groups in question.¹⁵⁹

It is nevertheless significant that esoteric racial thought often did diverge in detail from the mainstream of National Socialist orthodoxy. This factor has led Corinna Treitel to conclude that “in denying rigid racial hierarchies, they [occult groups] denied a basic tenet of the Nazi worldview.”¹⁶⁰ But many occult groups quite explicitly espoused and endorsed the notion of racial hierarchies, and while these may not always have been as rigid as their Nazi counterparts, the basic postulate of a

¹⁵⁸ For one of many examples see the section titled “Theosophie und Rasse” from the 1935 SD report “Die Grundlagen der Theosophie” (BA R58/6199/3: 354-365); 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.” In quite a few instances, the rejection of occult race theories was based on inaccurate analysis of those theories. An SD report on the Christian Community claimed: “Nach anthroposophisch-theosophischer Auffassung besteht eine völlige Trennung von Körper und Geist-Seele” (BA R58/5959: 118). In reality, for both theosophy and anthroposophy the connection between body, soul and spirit is crucial, particularly in racial terms.

¹⁵⁹ The SD’s evaluation of a 1936 book on ‘Aryan wisdom’ provides a revealing example. The book in question is Ernst Issberner-Haldane, *Arisches Weistum* (Zeulenroda: Sporn, 1935). Issberner-Haldane was an ariosophist, astrologer, and palm-reader; for biographical background see Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich*, 111-12. On March 8, 1936, an SS officer named Nicolai in the SD’s text analysis department in Leipzig submitted a report on Issberner-Haldane’s book (BA R58/7560: 27-38), characterizing its treatment of race as “dilettantish and pseudo-scientific.” Nicolai’s chief concern, however, was the ariosophical appropriation of Nazi themes; the report noted that Issberner-Haldane “bekennt sich wiederholt zu den Grundsätzen und Maßnahmen des nationalsozialistischen Staates, die die Reinhaltung der Rasse und Erbgesundheitspflege angehen, wobei er sie mit seiner eigenen Wiedergeburt- und Vervollkommnungslehre verquickt.” Moreover, the ariosophist author “betont etwas auffällig seine positive Stellung zum nationalsozialistischen Staat,” and presents himself as a “Vorkämpfer des Arischen Gedankens, wettet gegen die Juden als Niederrassige” and so forth. Nevertheless, the report concluded that Issberner-Haldane’s book was far removed from the National Socialist worldview, and closer to the worldview of anthroposophy: “Von der n.s. Weltanschauung ist die des Verfassers weit entfernt, die der Anthroposophie – vgl. Seelenwanderungslehre – noch nahe genug steht.” For a summary of the report see Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 228-29. Nicolai’s remark about ariosophical race theory being closer to anthroposophy than to National Socialism is indicative of a larger trend; SD analysts sometimes mistook anthroposophical works for ariosophical works. See e.g. the “Liste der bei VII A 1 (Ausweichstelle Niemes) aufgestellten Zeitschriften” which categorizes anthroposophist Gottfried Richter’s book *Die Germanen als Wegbahner eines kosmischen Christentums* under the heading “Ariosophie” (BA R58/6501). On other occasions, Nazi officials seem to have found ariosophy embarrassing; the June 1936 SD report on ariosophy warns that its ornate racial doctrine “bietet der Auslandshetze gegen die deutsche Rassenlehre besonders geeignetes Material.” (BA R58/64: 49)

¹⁶⁰ Treitel, *Science for the Soul*, 223. She specifically mentions theosophical conceptions of ‘brotherhood’ in this context. I examine the close association in theosophical thought between brotherhood and hierarchy, and its relation to theosophical race theories, in the Introduction.

hierarchy of races was central to occult racial theory in many of its predominant forms. This was the case for theosophical, anthroposophical, ariosophical and other esoteric tendencies alike. Rather than an ostensible denial of racial hierarchy, what seems to have caused consternation among SD analysts was the propensity of occult groups to cast their own elaborate spiritual precepts as the primary ideological foundation upon which a consistent Aryan or German viewpoint could arise, and to posit National Socialism as the political expression and practical realization of such a vision, and not as an all-encompassing worldview in its own right.

The various esoteric groups, in the SD's eyes, had reversed the relationship between the general and the particular, between Nazism as underlying or overarching philosophy and the small unconventional spiritual streams that gravitated toward it: merely celebrating the Third Reich as a stage in the unfolding of cosmic-racial evolution was insufficient.¹⁶¹ Even here, however, the SD frequently overlooked the lengths to which theosophists, anthroposophists and others were willing to go to accommodate their worldviews to the expectations and demands of the Nazi regime. Indeed the aggressively exaggerated tone of some of their assessments suggests that the 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.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Analysts for the Gestapo Sachsen, for example, utterly rejected Hermann Rudolph's claims of compatibility between his Theosophical Brotherhood and Nazism, emphasizing in particular the group's inadequate stance regarding the "Rassenfrage." Their examination of Rudolph's ideas on *Deutschtum*, *Volk*, and *Rasse* concluded that in his version of theosophy, "die gesamte nationalsozialistische Weltanschauung" was merely "in das Stufensystem der Theosophie eingebaut," instead of giving National Socialism absolute primacy. (BA R58/6198/2: 340) It is worth noting that Rudolph's publications emphatically opposed racial mixing.

¹⁶² Consider this example from an unsigned SD report on the Mazdaznan 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 Deutschum zu tun. Masdasnan muß vernichtet werden." (BA R58/6197/3: 609-611)

If standard 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? Far from confirming that “the Nazis” as such determinedly opposed anthroposophy, the June 1941 action demonstrates the volatility of Nazi attitudes toward alternative worldviews, particularly those that placed significant emphasis on race and nation. The SD targeted a wide range of openly racist organizations and did not tolerate their continued existence under National Socialist auspices.¹⁶³ The anti-esoteric faction of the SD also persecuted the emphatically pro-Nazi Theosophical Brotherhood, ariosophists, the Thule Society, various *völkisch* organizations, Aryan orders, and occultist groups that had supported Nazism even before 1933 and had high proportions of Nazi members.¹⁶⁴ Especially zealous foes of anthroposophy such as Schwartz-Bostunitsch, Hauer, and the Ludendorffers also denounced active Nazis. A simplistic schema of Nazis-versus-anthroposophists ignores the bureaucratic imperatives at stake in the SD’s campaign against occultism, and misconstrues the particularly competitive version of polycentrism that characterized the Nazi security services as such. The all-important dynamic of 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.

The reasons for Nazi hostility toward anthroposophy were not simple, straightforward, and self-evident. The reasons were complex, convoluted, and by no

¹⁶³ In April 1936, for example, the “Weltbund der Völkischen – Alliance Raciste Universelle” was banned on Heydrich’s orders (BA R58/1029: 32); according to King, *Nazi State and the New Religions*, 237, the group was banned in 1933. King further notes (232-33) that Artur Dinter’s religious movement was banned in June 1937; for background see Kren and Morris, “Race and Spirituality: Arthur Dinter’s Theosophical Antisemitism”. See also the SD files on the “Pan-Arische Liga / Bund der weißen Rasse” (BA R58/6240).

¹⁶⁴ The Weissenberg sect is an example; see Linse, *Geisterseher und Wunderwirker*, 149-58, 166.

means obvious, and scrutinizing them can disclose critical information about both National Socialism and anthroposophy. Placing the Nazi campaign against occultism into historical context does not require denying or downplaying the differences between anthroposophist racial theories and Nazi racial policies. What it requires is taking the principles and parameters of SD *weltanschauliche Gegnerforschung* seriously, and exploring how these factors influenced perceptions of anthroposophy among anti-occultist Nazis. The notion that Nazism per se postulated a vast ideological gap separating anthroposophy from the German *Volksgemeinschaft* derives from the SD's self-perception as guardian of the authentic Nazi worldview, as well as from the institutional determinants of SD practice in general, structured precisely to overemphasize doctrinal differences and dangers in just those cases where actual conceptual closeness obtained.

What made 'worldview' organizations into 'ideological enemies,' in other words, was not so much ideological distance as ideological proximity. The SD discerned a menacing potential in esoteric discourses on themes central to Nazism's own self-understanding, above all on the intertwined topics of nation and race. What the SD feared was any prospective challenge to the hegemony of strict National Socialist teachings as they defined them, especially from currents which shared significant theoretical overlap with Nazi imagery and ideals. This process did not point to a coherent National Socialist paradigm, however; instead it often revealed just how variegated and labile Nazi conceptions of race could be. When pressed to justify their choice of targets and substantiate their arguments, SD analysts frequently seemed to pick and choose from the chaotic profusion of Nazi racial theory, emphasizing its scientific, biological and materialist aspects while minimizing their spiritual correlates. At such moments, the nebulous nature of the very notion of race 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.

In light of these dynamics, a contextualized analysis of the Nazi campaign against occultism yields a mixed conclusion. While respecting the autonomy of historical subjects, whether Nazis or occultists, it is important to point out that in many cases the verdict reached by SD officials was mistaken.¹⁶⁵ Their findings regarding anthroposophy and other esoteric currents were untenable, and by themselves offer a poor basis for adjudicating the complex ideological interrelations between occultism and Nazism. At the same time, the SD's vendetta against occult groups did render anthroposophists and other esotericists victims of Nazism, as the contradictory reality of the anthroposophical movement during the Third Reich, in all its complexity and specificity and concreteness, was subsumed under the SD's ready-made construct of 'ideological enemies.' Rather than taking such easy categorizations at face value, a more nuanced and more differentiated understanding of the mutually reinforcing perceptions and misperceptions that animated this strange rapport generates as many questions as answers.

Among other matters, this history raises provocative questions about the interplay of ideology and institutions, the role of worldviews within power struggles and politics. Inherently unstable ideas of race and nation provided the battleground on which the political competition between pro-anthroposophical and anti-anthroposophical tendencies within National Socialism was carried out, and formed 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. In

¹⁶⁵ For a similar assessment of SD evaluations of pro-Nazi sentiments and statements by freemasons, see Melzer, *Konflikt und Anpassung*, 198 and passim; see also Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 149, and Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher*, 30, 118, and 171. In an important sense, the point of *Gegnerforschung* was to construct its targets and its objects of study, to create a profile of, for example, "anthroposophy," a profile that was parallel to and at times in conflict with the reality of anthroposophy; for the purposes of a totalitarian state, the goal was to shape an image of the enemy into the mold prepared for it, and then mobilize against this invented opponent.

one sense, the events of June 1941 represent the culmination of the long-running conflicted dynamic between the rarified world of esoteric belief systems and the concrete political choices imposed on occult groups and individuals by the advent of Nazism. The central concepts of race and nation, both highly contested ideological constructs, constituted an opportunity as well as a threat; the very elasticity and protean character of both notions shaped the convergence between occultism and Nazism while also determining the divergence and opposition between them. It was precisely the similarities between Nazi and occult conceptions, as much as the differences, that governed this dynamic.

SD and Gestapo responses to occultism may also indicate some of the more general contours of information gathering, and information creation, within the police apparatus and intelligence services of a totalitarian state. In several ways, SD practices of knowledge construction contained crucial elements of phantasy and projection and were often well removed from the realities of the groups they monitored. Their grudges regarding occultism represent an instance of ideological preoccupations taking on a life of their own and assuming institutional impetus. Convinced of the 'corruption' portended by esoteric outsiders, SD assessments suggested a looming menace from within the body of the nation that needed to be warded off through excising the corrupting element. SD officials were moreover producers, not just guardians, of National Socialist doctrine, working to establish their own hegemonic status in the array of Nazi agencies concerned with ideological rectitude. The pursuit of occultists serves as a reminder of how thoroughly ideologized this intelligence-collecting bureaucracy was, such that SD officers themselves often did not recognize a distinction between instrumental means and ideological ends; the two converged in campaigns like the June 1941 action.

To the extent that anthroposophical projects represented a confluence of occult traditions and minority spiritual worldviews with alternative cultural endeavors in

education, nutrition, health care, agriculture, and other areas of *Lebensreform*, they constituted both an alluring potential and an alarming hazard from Nazi points of view. In their efforts toward holism, toward transcendence, toward renewal and regeneration; in their mission to heal Germany and the world from the ravages of materialism; in their ambition to redeem humanity through the German spirit, anthroposophists could appear both as allies and as enemies of Nazism's own goals. Throughout the intricate history that arose from this context, there was no single reaction of "the Nazis" as such to anthroposophy, or of "the anthroposophists" to Nazism. What emerged, rather, was a complex and variable series of alignments and re-alignments forged against the backdrop of institutional exigencies and idealistic aspirations. As with earlier interactions between *völkisch* groups and anthroposophists, the resulting labyrinth of expectations and counter-expectations, of apprehensions and uncertainties, of mutual suspicions coupled with possibilities for recognition and cooperation, yielded delusions on both sides. Neither common commitment to German destiny nor a broad range of agreements on a practical level led to consistent partnership. The chance that some had hoped for, a fruitful synthesis of occult worldviews and fascist politics, was rendered impossible by the same factors which had given rise to it originally, and 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, the forlorn tableau of Steiner's followers reflected, on its own small scale, the climax of anthroposophy's conflicted, ambivalent and imbalanced relationship to the Nazi state.

Chapter 7

Anthroposophy and the Rise of Fascism in Italy

In the early decades of the twentieth century anthroposophy was a primarily German phenomenon, with the 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 discernible 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.¹ This complicated situation set the stage for a series of remarkable anthroposophical engagements with Fascist racial ideology and 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. From 1910 onward, several

¹ Italian anthroposophy's early history has attracted minimal scholarly attention. The sole historiographically adequate article, a sympathetic but informative treatment by an author who has published extensively in anthroposophist and other esoteric publications, is available in two different versions: Michele Beraldo, "Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista" *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 14 (2002), 145-79, and Beraldo, "L'Antroposofia e il suo rapporto con il Regime Fascista" in Gianfranco de Turreis, ed., *Esoterismo e Fascismo: Storia, interpretazioni, documenti* (Rome: Mediterranee, 2006), 77-103. Beraldo draws extensively on archival sources. One striking lacuna in both versions of the article is the absence of any sustained discussion of the racial writings of several of the anthroposophists Beraldo examines. See also the excellent recent overview by Marco Pasi, "Teosofia e antroposofia nell'Italia della prima metà del Novecento" in the forthcoming volume on esotericism, edited by Gian Mario Cazzaniga, in Einaudi's *Annali della Storia d'Italia* series.

prominent Italian theosophists sided with Steiner, who emphasized the superiority of European spiritual traditions over Eastern ones, against the “Indian” and “English” variant of theosophy represented by Besant.² Steiner’s Italian followers portrayed the intra-theosophical conflict between Steiner and Besant as a struggle between “oriental mysticism and occidental mysticism,” scorning the “Indian conceptions” which in their view had debased theosophy, and embracing instead Steiner’s “Christian esotericism.”³ 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.”⁴ In 1910 a prominent founder of Italian anthroposophy, Giovanni Colazza, noted the role of racial differences in distinguishing Western from Eastern forms of esotericism: “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.”⁵

² See Carlo Paes, “Cronaca di Teosofia” *Rassegna Contemporanea* March 1911, 534-36. Paes, “Cronaca di Teosofia” *Rassegna Contemporanea* October 1911, 156-58, harshly criticizes the “predominantly Indian mysticism” of Besant and champions the “Christian mysticism” of Steiner. See also Paes, “Cronaca di Teosofia” *Rassegna Contemporanea* February 10, 1913, 509-17; Paes, “Cronaca di Teosofia” *Rassegna Contemporanea* June 25, 1913, 1027-31; and Edouard Schuré, “Il dissidio nel campo teosofico” *Rassegna Contemporanea* June 10, 1913. Steiner had cultivated an Italian audience for several years as Secretary of the German Section of the Theosophical Society. He visited Italy in spring 1909 at the invitation of an Italian princess, giving theosophical lectures in Rome, Milan, Palermo and Trieste, and gave another lecture series in Italy in 1910. Steiner had visited Venice, Genoa and Rome in 1907, and Naples in 1908, but lectures are not recorded for those visits. Steiner’s future wife Marie was active in theosophical circles in Italy since the turn of the century.

³ Paes, “Cronaca di Teosofia” *Rassegna Contemporanea* April 1912, 146-49.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 147. Similar sentiments played a role in Germany as well. In 1911 long-time theosophist Günther Wagner, who sided with Steiner in the split, wrote to another leading German theosophist who opposed Steiner, 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.” Wagner quoted in Klatt, *Theosophie und Anthroposophie: Neue Aspekte zu ihrer Geschichte*, 102.

⁵ Colazza quoted in Beraldo, “Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista,” 147. 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.” “The dying races of the East still need the Oriental school. The Western school is for the races of the future.” (Steiner, *Aus den Inhalten der esoterischen Schulen*, 221, 227) Steiner held that “the European,” with his “natural endowment,”

Italian anthroposophy thus adopted Steiner's linking of spiritual and racial distinctions from the beginning. An additional factor in the rise of the Italian wing of the movement was the nationalist background of several of its leading figures. Alongside Colazza, 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.⁶ Colonna published the journal *Rassegna contemporanea*, a political and cultural review which served as a significant forum for early anthroposophical viewpoints.⁷ The journal adopted an irredentist and pro-colonialist stance, and its politics have been characterized as "radical-nationalist."⁸ Colonna was a fervent proponent of Italian colonialism and a spokesperson for 'democratic imperialism.' He was an interventionist in 1914-15 and volunteered for military service, becoming an artillery officer.⁹

stands "a stage higher" than "the Oriental." (Steiner, "Die Völker der Erde im Lichte der Geisteswissenschaft" *Die Drei* December 1925, 652) For similar claims in Italian see Rudolf Steiner, *I misteri dell'Oriente e del cristianesimo* (Milan: I.T.E., 1936). An in-depth discussion of Steiner's treatment of Eastern traditions is available in Myers, "Colonial consciousness: Rudolf Steiner's Orientalism and German cultural identity."

⁶ A sympathetic biographical overview can be found in Michele Beraldo, "Il duca Colonna di Cesarò, ministro antroposofo" in de Turrís, ed., *Esoterismo e Fascismo*, 237-41.

⁷ In addition to the "Cronaca di Teosofia" column, *Rassegna contemporanea* promoted Steiner's works in various ways; the back cover of the 1913 issues, for example, displayed full page ads for the 'Biblioteca della Rassegna Contemporanea,' a third of which were titles by Steiner. Anthroposophist Arturo Onofri also published regularly in its pages. The journal gave significant attention to racial subjects as well; see e.g. Giovanni Boine, "Gobineau e la razza" *Rassegna contemporanea* August 10, 1914, 394-413, and the positive review of Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* in *Rassegna contemporanea* October 1912, 176-77.

⁸ 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 at 289.

⁹ For an example of Colonna's outspokenly nationalist and pro-war stance see his article "Ai nostri lettori" *Rassegna Contemporanea* December 25, 1914, 569-71; subsequent issues carried pro-war pieces by various Futurists. For background on Italian responses to WWI see Giuseppe Galasso, "Gli intellettuali italiani e la guerra alla vigilia del 1914" in Vincenzo Cali, ed., *Gli intellettuali e la Grande guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000), 19-39.

In late 1917 Colonna co-founded a nationalist group, the *Fascio di Difesa Nazionale*, with an anti-clerical and anti-socialist emphasis.¹⁰ From 1907 onward he served as an official of the Radical Party, breaking off in February 1922 to form a new political party, *Democrazia Sociale*.¹¹ He did not have a consistent political ideology, and is sometimes seen as part of the center or even the moderate left, though in several ways his political orientation in the wake of the World War tended toward the right.¹² Along with much of the Italian political elite, Colonna and *Democrazia Sociale* opposed the entry of mass parties into politics, above all the Socialists and the Popular Party. In part, this stance reflected general anthroposophist suspicions toward democratic political procedures.¹³ It also shaped Colonna's initial backing for Mussolini and his involvement in the rise of the Fascist regime.

After the March on Rome, *Democrazia Sociale* provided crucial support to Mussolini's first government, and Colonna served as a minister in Mussolini's cabinet from October 1922, when Mussolini took power, until February 1924. Historical accounts describe Colonna's party as chiefly devoted to its own self-preservation and acquiring government posts for its clientele.¹⁴ During this period he may have acted as a conduit for anthroposophical interest in the new political phenomenon of Fascism, a subject on which German anthroposophists were divided.¹⁵ In 1923 Steiner reportedly

¹⁰ Romano Canosa, *A caccia di ebrei: Mussolini, Preziosi e l'antisemitismo fascista* (Milan: Mondadori, 2006), 34.

¹¹ In February 1922 *Democrazia Sociale* had 41 representatives in parliament, the Giolittian democrats had 42, the Fascists 32, and the Socialists 122. For further context see Marco Rossi, "'Lo stato democratico' (1925) e l'antifascismo antidemocratico di Julius Evola" *Storia contemporanea* 20 (1989), 5-43.

¹² See Danilo Veneruso, *La vigilia del fascismo: Il primo ministero Facta nella crisi dello stato liberale in Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1968), 14, 39-40, 112, 499.

¹³ For a contrary interpretation see Rossi, "'Lo stato democratico'" 27.

¹⁴ Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919-1929* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 101-02, 135, 138-40. Cf. also Veneruso, *La vigilia del fascismo*, 246-51, and Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista: La conquista del potere 1921-1925* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), 506-09. Colonna's position was Postal Minister.

¹⁵ Some of the earliest anthroposophist assessments of Fascism were clearly negative; see e.g. Karl Heyer, "Mussolini über den Faschismus" *Anthroposophie* September 14, 1922, 5-6. Subsequent analyses were more affirmative; the lead article in *Anthroposophie* July 13, 1930, 217-18, by editor Emil

asked Colonna to deliver a copy of Steiner's book on 'social threefolding' to Mussolini, but the Duce evidently never received it.¹⁶ Colonna's involvement in the early years of Mussolini's regime stands as a prominent counter-example to the image of anthroposophists as 'unpolitical.' Colonna did not remain a supporter of the Duce, however. As Mussolini moved 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 "was considered an antifascist and abandoned political life, dedicating himself exclusively to literary activity."¹⁷ He said in retrospect that he had never been a Fascist but had admired Mussolini and sympathized with the Fascist movement.¹⁸

Leinhas, was admiring of Mussolini. Johannes Hemleben, "Mussolini" *Die Christengemeinschaft* June 1928, 91-92, offered an enthusiastically positive portrait of the Duce and of Fascism. Hemleben compared Mussolini favorably to Wilson, while noting that Fascism was appropriate for Italy, not Germany. Praising the Duce as "blutvoll, dynamisch, erdhaft," Hemleben wrote: "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. On the general 'spiritual' facets of Italian Fascism cf. 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.

¹⁶ Compare the accounts in Luigi Capano, "Se il Duce avesse letto Steiner" in de Turrís, ed., *Esoterismo e Fascismo*, 107-09, and Beraldo, "Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista," 164.

¹⁷ Ferraresi, "Radicalismo antigiolittiano ed imperialismo democratico," 242. His sparse surveillance in the latter half of the 1920s is recorded in his Fascist political police file, ACS Pol. Pol. b. 320 fasc. pers. Colonna di Cesarò; the police generally viewed him as a reclusive aristocrat now uninvolved in politics who was unlikely to act against the regime, unfriendly toward Fascism but unthreatening. For background on the political police in the Fascist era see Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 33-123; Mimmo Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra: Agenti, collaboratori e vittime della polizia politica fascista* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999); and Romano Canosa, *I servizi segreti del Duce: I persecutori e le vittime* (Milan: Mondadori, 2000). On the suspicions, dismissed by Fascist authorities, that Colonna was involved in Violet Gibson's 1926 attempt to assassinate Mussolini see Beraldo, "L'Antroposofia e il suo rapporto con il Regime Fascista," 98-102, and Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Woman Who Shot Mussolini* (New York: Holt, 2010), 191-94. Saunders quotes a 1926 British Foreign Office report explaining that Colonna "is not one of those Opposition leaders who have incurred special Fascist resentment [...] and the idea of connecting him with Miss Gibson's attempt seems too ridiculous to merit serious consideration." (194)

¹⁸ "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." Colonna quoted in Beraldo, "Il

Colonna's mother, Baroness Emmelina de Renzis, a German-speaking Italian anthroposophist, introduced Steiner's works to Italy. She was aided considerably in this task by Colonna's colleague Giovanni Preziosi, who strongly recommended to a major publishing house, Laterza, that they publish de Renzis' translations of Steiner's books.¹⁹ Preziosi continued to support the publication of Steiner's works for many years.²⁰ He collaborated with Colonna from 1910 onward, and for a time Colonna's *Rassegna contemporanea* and Preziosi's *La Vita Italiana* were sister journals.²¹ 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 World War I.²² Despite his philosemitic views, Colonna continued his copious contributions to *La Vita Italiana* well after its turn to open and aggressive antisemitism in early 1920.²³ Colonna was also on good terms with Julius Evola for much of the 1920s and 1930s, as was his fellow anthroposophist Colazza.²⁴ Evola and Preziosi went on to become prominent supporters of anthroposophical race theorists in the later stages of Italian Fascism.

duca Colonna di Cesarò," 238, from an undated archival source which Beraldo tentatively dates to 1926.

¹⁹ Daniela Coli, "Religione e occultismo nella 'casa editrice di Croce'" *Passato e Presente* 1 (1982), 162-69. Laterza published eight titles by Steiner between 1919 and 1932. Including other publishers, by 1924 twelve of Steiner's central works were available in Italian; cf. Rossi, "'Lo stato democratico,'" 15-16.

²⁰ Daniela Coli, *Croce, Laterza e la cultura europea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1983), 219-21.

²¹ The 1913 issues of *Rassegna contemporanea* offer combined subscriptions with *La Vita Italiana*. Preziosi contributed frequently to *Rassegna contemporanea* beginning in 1910.

²² Rudolf Steiner, "Al popolo tedesco e al mondo civile" *La Vita Italiana* November 1919, 399-402; the editors' note reports that Steiner personally chose *La Vita Italiana* to bring his views to an Italian audience.

²³ 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.

²⁴ See Julius Evola, *Il cammino del cinabro* (Milan: Scheiwiller, 1963), 82; cf. Rossi, "'Lo stato democratico.'" Part of what drew together figures like Colonna, Preziosi, and Evola at this early stage, aside from a shared commitment to esotericism, was a shared opposition to materialism and socialism, as well as common values regarding national heritage, imperialism, 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 response to the rise of Fascism and its national and racial program. Both he and Colazza played significant roles within the international anthroposophist movement as well; 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 cabinet.²⁵ Both men, one an aristocratic politician, the other a renowned physician, also reflected the upscale social makeup of Italian anthroposophy, in which nobles, doctors, lawyers, professors and the like frequently held leading positions.²⁶ This demographic accent was noted by the authorities during the Fascist era; police reports on anthroposophist gatherings frequently mentioned the social composition of the audience – mostly older, many women, numerous professors and teachers and retirees, very few workers – and even remarked on the luxurious automobiles present.²⁷ Anthroposophical events attracted relatively large audiences, and anthroposophist organizations maintained substantial memberships throughout most of the Fascist period, much larger than theosophical groups.²⁸

²⁵ For basic biographical information on Colazza (1877-1953) from anthroposophist sources see von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 133; Selg, ed., *Anthroposophische Ärzte*, 117; and Enrico Pappacena, *Di alcuni cultori della Scienza dello Spirito* (Bari: Andriola, 1971), 188-89. I am indebted to Marco Pasi for providing a copy of Pappacena's book.

²⁶ Alongside figures like de Renzis, Colonna di Cesarò, and Colazza, the founding members of the "Italian Group for Anthroposophical Studies" included a Countess, a Baroness, a Marquis, a doctor, and an engineer; see the 1931 statutes of the Gruppo Italiano di Studi Antroposofici, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

²⁷ See the May 2, 1935 and May 7, 1935 reports from the Questura di Roma on meetings of the Italian Group for Anthroposophical Studies in Rome, ACS MI/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."

²⁸ Rome police reports on lectures by Colazza on "anthroposophy and occult medicine" from 1935 through 1938, for example, consistently note that the venue was crowded, with estimates of forty to fifty people in each audience; see e.g. Questura di Roma, April 11, 1938, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317. A May 18, 1931 report from the General Directorate for Public Security titled "Oggetto:

The 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.”²⁹ He observed that German anthroposophical publications were available for sale in Italian translation, and remarked on the number of foreign audience members. He found the featured lecture “rather abstruse.” His summary provides a sense of the proceedings: “There is a little bit of everything: Theosophy and astral bodies, imprecise divinities and references to astrology, negation of the Darwinian theory of the evolution of species [...]”³⁰ These police reports do 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, at times associating them with freemasonry.³¹

Fascist anti-esoteric measures were a potential danger to anthroposophy, not least because several anthroposophists were involved in antifascist activities. Violet

Movimento Antroposofico” in *ibid.* estimates that there were roughly one hundred anthroposophists in Rome alone at the time, in addition to the groups in Milan, Trieste, and elsewhere. Theosophist groups were much smaller; a March 19, 1932 report from the Prefect of Genoa estimates only about 20 participants total at the national Theosophical congress: ACS PCM 1931-33 14.3.4696 Società Teosofica Italiana.

²⁹ Questura di Roma, “Gruppo italiano di studi antroposofici,” May 2, 1935, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317. While such a remark could have been threatening in light of the government’s anti-Masonic policy (freemasonry had been prohibited a decade earlier), the substantial report contains no hint of political critique, nor do any of the other documents in the file.

³⁰ *Ibid.* Police documents from the Fascist period often conflated theosophy and anthroposophy.

³¹ For a detailed account of Fascist efforts against esotericism see Dana Lloyd Thomas, “Il Tempio assalito: Introduzione allo studio della campagna antiesoterica nell’Italia fascista” *Politica Romana* 5 (1999), 253-300. On Fascism and freemasonry see also Canosa, *I servizi segreti del Duce*, 79-88, and on surveillance of theosophical groups by the political police see “La teosofia nell’occhio della polizia politica” in *ibid.*, 89-98. For further context on Fascist attitudes toward masonry and esotericism see Silverio Corvisieri, *Il mago dei generali: Poteri occulti nella crisi del fascismo e della monarchia* (Rome: Odradek, 2001). 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.

Gibson, the eccentric Anglo-Irish aristocrat who tried to assassinate Mussolini in 1926, traveled in theosophical and anthroposophical circles.³² Antifascist author and literary figure Armando Cavalli was an anthroposophist, and Eugenio Curiel, a prominent figure in the antifascist resistance, was for a time drawn to anthroposophy as well. Curiel (1912-1945), a physicist from a Jewish family in Trieste, played an important role 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. His commitment to anthroposophy, lasting approximately three years, was part of a turbulent ideological and political development; near the end of his anthroposophical period in 1934 he joined the Fascist party, and was attracted to the ‘spiritual’ theories of Fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile before eventually joining the clandestine Communist party.³³ Alongside Colonna di Cesarò, Curiel’s ideological trajectory indicates the political volatility of anthroposophical engagement in the Fascist era.

Despite this political unpredictability, for most of the Fascist period anthroposophists experienced no significant persecution. When they did draw the attention of the state, the verdict was frequently forgiving. After 1925 Colonna was viewed as an antifascist, but a largely harmless one, while Colazza was seen as

³² Saunders, *The Woman Who Shot Mussolini*, 42-45, 61, 67, 161-62; cf. Beraldo, “Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista,” 166-69. In light of the conspiracist inclinations of Fascist reports on the matter, as well as Gibson’s psychological instability (her attorney presented a defense based on “mental infirmity,” and after her release she spent the remainder of her life in an English insane asylum), these associations should not be overemphasized.

³³ For details see the section “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). According to Quaranta, Curiel was an anthroposophist from 1932-34. Briamonte argues that Curiel’s early dedication to Steiner left significant traces in his later thought. Though Curiel’s adherence to anthroposophy was transitory, it was not an anomaly in antifascist circles; Briamonte, 126 quotes a 1944 correspondence between two young antifascists interested in anthroposophy.

“indifferent toward the Regime.”³⁴ 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.³⁵

Within the surviving files on anthroposophy from the Fascist security services, wary analyses such as these are counterbalanced by remarkably positive assessments.³⁶ Fascist authorities were evidently 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.”³⁷ In several instances anthroposophists were members in good standing of the Fascist party, the PNF. A 1942 report from local police officials on an anthroposophist named Angelo Giusti, for example, noted that he displayed “good moral and political conduct” and was “a member of the PNF since 1933.” Other assessments from various offices expressed concern about his involvement with “occult sciences,” but observed that he “belongs to the Aryan race.”³⁸ In December 1940 the Prefect of Milan reported that the local branch of the Anthroposophical Society had 44 members and was not politically suspect in any way.³⁹ A January 1941 report on the Anthroposophical Society branch in San Remo found that it “is not in

³⁴ Questura di Roma, March 26, 1931, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

³⁵ ACS Pol. Pol. b. 1307 fasc. pers. Steiner Rudolf.

³⁶ By far the largest archival source is the file on anthroposophy compiled by the General Directorate for Public Security in the Interior Ministry, ACS MI/DGPS Div. Aff. gen. e ris., Associazioni G1, b. 28 f. 317: Società Generale Antroposofica con Sede in Dornach (Svizzera), containing materials from 1931 to 1942; the documents are unnumbered and sorted into a variety of sub-files arranged by geographical location.

³⁷ See e.g. the series of 1932 cases from Rome in ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

³⁸ Prefettura di Lucca to DGPS, February 23, 1942, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

³⁹ Prefettura di Milano to DGPS, December 26, 1940, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

disagreement with the current regulations for public associations or with Fascist doctrine.”⁴⁰ A week later, a report on the anthroposophical group in Faenza stated that it undertook no activities contrary to the regime.⁴¹ A comprehensive report from 1932 declared that none of the anthroposophical groups in Italy displayed any activities or any attitudes contrary to the Fascist government.⁴²

Even when they did not belong to the Fascist party, some leading anthroposophists were considered pro-fascist in the eyes of the police and security services. Several documents attest to prominent anthroposophist Marco Spaini’s “favorable sentiments toward the Regime.”⁴³ A 1938 report notes: “although not a member of the PNF, [Spaini] has proven himself an admirer of the Duce and is positively disposed toward the Regime.”⁴⁴ Spaini’s colleague Fanny Podreider, president of the San Remo anthroposophist group, belonged to the Fascist women’s organization.⁴⁵ Anthroposophist poet Arturo Onofri, for his part, responded positively to the rise of Fascism.⁴⁶ Onofri’s friend Alcibiade Mazzarelli, a key figure in the development of Italian anthroposophy, was commended for his “good political conduct.” Local authorities asserted in 1932 that “Mazzarelli is an irreproachable person in every respect.”⁴⁷ Other anthroposophist officials were long-time members of

⁴⁰ Memorandum from the Divisione Polizia Politica, Rome, January 16, 1941, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

⁴¹ Memorandum January 23, 1941, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

⁴² 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.”

⁴³ See e.g. Prefettura di Imperia to DGPS, July 23, 1933, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317. Spaini (1887-1969) financed the publication of many Italian translations of anthroposophical works.

⁴⁴ Questura di Imperia to DGPS, December 4, 1938, ACS Pol. Pol. b. 1292 fasc. pers. Spaini Marco.

⁴⁵ See the 1938 “Elenco dei Soci” of the San Remo anthroposophical group, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

⁴⁶ Beraldo, “Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista,” 149-50.

⁴⁷ Prefettura di Arezzo to DGPS, February 26, 1932, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317. Mazzarelli (1873-1932) was a personal student of Steiner and translated several of Steiner’s works into Italian. On his crucial role in the Italian anthroposophist movement see Beraldo, “Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista,” 147-48. Beraldo does not mention the laudatory assessment of Mazzarelli from Fascist officials. See also the references to Mazzarelli in Rudolf Steiner, *Mantrische Sprüche* –

the Fascist party. Marquis Luigi Andrea Calabrini, for example, 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.⁴⁸ The founding Secretary of the Italian Anthroposophical Society, Ettore Martinoli, became a Fascist in July 1919.⁴⁹ Rinaldo Küfferle, an important anthroposophist author and publicist, was also a PNF member.⁵⁰

The small Italian biodynamic movement displayed comparably pro-Fascist sympathies. Anthroposophist Luciano Chimelli, who introduced biodynamic agriculture to Italy, was the chief public representative of biodynamics in the Fascist period. Chimelli (1880-1943) was an outspoken admirer of Mussolini and of Fascism, particularly its environmental programs.⁵¹ In support of biodynamics he invoked the Duce's dictum that Italy must "redeem the soil, and with the soil the men, and with the men the race."⁵² Chimelli came from a wealthy northern Italian family and served as a cavalry officer in World War One, when he encountered anthroposophy. During the Fascist era he was *Podestà* of the town of Pergine, and in 1927 became president of

Seelenübungen II, 1903 – 1925 (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1999), and Steiner, *Sprüche, Dichtungen, Mantren: Ergänzungsband* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2002).

⁴⁸ Questura di Roma, March 26, 1931, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

⁴⁹ See the nine page application to the Interior Ministry dated August 7, 1931, signed by Martinoli on behalf of the Società Antroposofica d'Italia, boasting of his service to the Fascist movement and regime.

⁵⁰ 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. For basic biographical background on Küfferle (1903-1955), with no mention of his Fascist involvement, see Pappacena, *Di alcuni cultori della Scienza dello Spirito*, 133-34.

⁵¹ His works include Luciano Chimelli, *Della lavorazione del terreno* (Pergine: Luigi Torgler, 1941), and Luciano Chimelli, *Del governo dei concimi organici* (Trent: Edizioni Mutilati e Invalidi, 1942); the latter work in particular contains many references to Steiner. Chimelli also translated a number of German works by anthroposophist authors and published a book and pamphlet series, the "Collana dell'agricoltura bio-dinamica." Alongside Chimelli as the most visible spokesperson for the Italian biodynamic movement, Weleda's representative in Italy during the Fascist era was Alberto Galli in Milan (cf. Chimelli, *Del governo dei concimi organici*, 73).

⁵² Luciano Chimelli, "Prefazione all'edizione italiana" to Giovanni Schomerus, *Il metodo di coltivazione biologico-dinamico* (Pergine: Luigi Torgler, 1934), iii-xx; quote from Mussolini on xvii. On the following page Chimelli quotes Mussolini again in support of his argument for biodynamics.

the provincial agricultural federation.⁵³ Chimelli visited his biodynamic colleagues in Germany in 1935 as an official in the Fascist agricultural apparatus, which the German biodynamic league reported proudly to its Nazi party sponsors.⁵⁴ In 1940 the German biodynamic periodical *Demeter* extolled Fascism for rescuing the Italian landscape, for “saving the soil and thereby saving the race.”⁵⁵ While praising the achievements of Fascist environmental policy, Chimelli warned that if not complemented by biodynamic principles, such efforts would remain incomplete. “If we fail at our task, the consequences for the future of the race could be disastrous.”⁵⁶ According to Chimelli, “the climate created by Fascism” was especially hospitable to a biodynamic approach, with its anti-materialist thrust and its spiritual basis.⁵⁷

These personal testimonials of pro-fascist sentiment on the part of high-profile anthroposophists were matched by a number of notably positive portrayals of anthroposophy in semi-official Fascist organs. The Fascist-era entries on anthroposophy and Steiner in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* (the so-called ‘Treccani’), edited by chief Fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile, are respectful and informed.⁵⁸ In 1930 the monthly illustrated companion magazine to the foremost Fascist newspaper, Mussolini’s own *Popolo d’Italia*, published an extremely sympathetic portrait of anthroposophy and particularly eurythmy, complete with a large photograph of Rudolf

⁵³ Pappacena, *Di alcuni cultori della Scienza dello Spirito*, 167-71 provides a substantial biographical account, describing Chimelli as “a passionately and unyieldingly committed anthroposophist” whose “devotion and dedication to anthroposophy were absolute” (169). Pappacena does not mention Chimelli’s pro-Fascist stance.

⁵⁴ Erhard Bartsch to Bernhard Hörmann, Reichsleitung der NSDAP, July 19, 1935 (BA R9349/1), identifying Chimelli as “President of the Fascist Agricultural Association of the Province of Trent.” See also Bartsch to H. G. Müller, July 19, 1935, forwarding a text by Chimelli on biodynamics.

⁵⁵ Aldo Pavari, “Die Wiederbewaldung des Appenins” *Demeter* February 1940, 13-17, quote on 15. The article celebrates Fascist reforestation programs in particular, declaring that these environmental achievements were only possible under the Fascist regime.

⁵⁶ Chimelli, “Prefazione all’edizione italiana,” xvii; he adds that assuring “the future of the race” must be a central task of agriculture.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, xx. The concluding paragraph quotes Mussolini hailing “the light of the spirit” and calls for applying this to agriculture.

⁵⁸ Vittorio Vezzani, “Antroposofia” *Enciclopedia Italiana* vol. 3 (Milan: Rizzoli, 1929), 610-11; Guido Calogero, “Rudolfo Steiner” *Enciclopedia Italiana* vol. 32 (Milan: Rizzoli, 1936), 670.

Steiner.⁵⁹ In 1937 the hard-line newspaper *Regime Fascista* published a substantial interview with Albert Steffen, President of the Anthroposophical Society, in which Steffen praised Italy and predicted that it would once again advance to spiritual greatness.⁶⁰ Much of the interview was devoted to anthroposophical subjects and suggested a considerable degree of agreement between anthroposophy and Fascism.⁶¹

Despite these significant instances of harmony and mutual appreciation, relations between the Italian anthroposophical movement and various functionaries of the Fascist state were sometimes strained. Many of these tensions had to do with the developing alliance between Italy and Germany from the mid-1930s onward. The Fascist security services took note of the Gestapo's dissolution of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany in November 1935, but there is no indication that anything similar was considered for Italy.⁶² In April 1936 Himmler signed a pact with the chief of the Italian police to cooperate in pursuing foes, thus setting the institutional backdrop for a shift in Fascist attitudes toward anthroposophy in the wake of the June 1941 campaign against occultism in Germany. In July 1941 the Fascist security services requested reports from regional police agencies regarding anthroposophical activities within their jurisdictions. Most provinces reported that there was no local branch of the Anthroposophical Society in their territory.⁶³ Even in Rome and Milan, there does not seem to have been much anthroposophist

⁵⁹ Innocenza Cappa, "L'euritmia e Rodolfo Steiner" *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* February 1930, 48-49. The article declares that Steiner, "sacerdote ideale di una nuova fede nella vita, non deve essere un ignoto in questa nostra Italia." According to anthroposophist Enrico Pappacena, writing in 1928, references to Steiner and anthroposophy were not infrequent in Italian magazines and journals at the time; cf. Enrico Pappacena, *Da Lucifero al Cristo: Itinerario spirituale d'un uomo 'rinato'* (San Casciano: Casa del Libro, 1933), 427.

⁶⁰ Rinaldo Küfferle, "Colloquio con Steffen" *Regime Fascista* December 12, 1937, 5.

⁶¹ Ibid. Küfferle claimed, among other things, that Steffen's perspective on the deficiencies of "Wilsonism" was the same as the Duce's. Steffen's own statements were enthusiastically positive about Italy, phrased not in political terms but in cultural-spiritual terms. Steffen visited Fascist Italy regularly.

⁶² See the November 15, 1935 General Directorate for Public Security memorandum acknowledging a telegram from Berlin reporting that the Anthroposophical Society in Germany has been dissolved, ACS DGPS b. 28 f. 317.

⁶³ The relevant correspondence can be found in ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

organizational life in Italy at this point.⁶⁴ The Milan section of the Anthroposophical Society dissolved in December 1941, and its assets were confiscated by the state.⁶⁵ Organized anthroposophy did not entirely disappear; an October 1941 document submitted to the Fascist security services outlined the goals of the Anthroposophical Society, denying that anthroposophy had any political content or any connection to theosophy, and declaring instead that its objectives were limited to the study of Steiner's works and the cultivation of spiritual science as the antithesis to the formerly dominant materialist forms of science and philosophy. Its final sentence read: "All members are of the Aryan race."⁶⁶

This last claim pointedly indicates the changed situation in Italy after the adoption of an official racist and antisemitic policy in 1938.⁶⁷ In some ways a reversal of previous practice, the Fascist race laws inaugurated a new phase in the regime's outlook and its relations with various sectors of public life. One standard work notes that "ethnic racism became the main ideological component of Fascism from 1938 until the end of the Second World War."⁶⁸ Several varieties of 'spiritual racism' came to prominence in this context, as many Fascist intellectuals "stressed the 'spiritual' rather than the biological idea of race."⁶⁹ The practical distinction between spiritual racism and biological racism in Fascist Italy was frequently unclear, as proponents of

⁶⁴ Questura di Roma to DGPS, October 23, 1941, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317, reported that the Rome branch of the Anthroposophical Society had only 15 members by this time.

⁶⁵ See the collection of documents on the Milan anthroposophical group, dating from 1931 to 1942, in ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

⁶⁶ The document is untitled and unsigned; it is dated October 24, 1941, and begins with the words "Lo scopo della Società Antroposofica": ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

⁶⁷ The shift in policy was announced in July 1938 with the publication of a document known variously as the Manifesto of Race and the Manifesto of the Racist Scientists. The manifesto initially appeared in the *Giornale d'Italia* on July 15, 1938, at the top of the front page under the banner headline "Il Fascismo e il problema della razza." For an accessible introductory account see Franco Cuomo, *I dieci: Chi erano gli scienziati italiani che firmarono il Manifesto della razza* (Milan: Baldini Castoldi Dalai, 2005). Legislative initiatives enacting a range of explicitly racist laws began in September 1938. More detailed references and an extensive bibliography are included in the following chapter.

⁶⁸ Edward Tannenbaum, *The Fascist Experience: Italian Society and Culture 1922-1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 78.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

spiritual racism called for “denying Jews influence in government or education because they had a different spirit.”⁷⁰ A convergence of spiritual and biological themes was common even in official documents, such as this text from the April 1940 “Race Exhibition” in Rome, sponsored by the Ministry of Education:

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.⁷¹

The Fascist race laws entailed a number of complications for anthroposophical 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 chief publisher at the time, Laterza, pointed out that Steiner was not in fact Jewish.⁷² Anthroposophist Rinaldo Küfferle had already submitted a copy of Steiner’s Aryan certificate to the Ministry of Popular Culture in autumn 1938. The Ministry did not place Steiner on the list of prohibited authors until mid-1942, after pressure from their German colleagues, and declined to authorize re-printing of previously published works.⁷³ Nonetheless, a wide variety of Steiner’s publications was available throughout the Fascist period, including more than thirty books.⁷⁴ New titles even

⁷⁰ Ibid. The confluence of spiritual and biological forms of racism can sometimes be traced in the archival record. For example, ACS SPD/CR 1922-1943 480/R b. 146 f. 401 contains correspondence from antisemitic Fascists championing “la spiritualità italiana” against “la degenerazione artistica apportata dall’influsso ebraico.” A few documents later is a “Promemoria per il Duce” from the Istituto Centrale di Statistica del Regno d’Italia, dated December 19, 1938, following up on Mussolini’s instructions to undertake “un’indagine antropometrica sui militari,” proposing to measure and analyze factors such as height, weight, cranial form, shape of nose, and color of hair, eyes, and skin.

⁷¹ ACS PCM (1937-39) 14/1/8147. For similar views see e.g. Pasquale Pennisi, “Appunti per la dottrina fascista della razza” *Gerarchia* July 1942, 286-89.

⁷² Giorgio Fabre, *L’Elenco: Censura fascista, editoria e autori ebrei* (Turin: Zamorani, 1998), 287. As noted above, Steiner’s work was originally recommended to Laterza by Preziosi, an outspoken antisemite. For general context see Guido Bonsaver, *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

⁷³ Fabre, *L’Elenco*, 367-69.

⁷⁴ A 1941 file from the General Directorate for Public Security includes an incomplete list of “alcuni libri di Rudolf Steiner” in Italian, comprising 30 titles: ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

appeared in 1942 and 1943.⁷⁵ Many works by other anthroposophist authors were published in Italian as well.⁷⁶

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 Gentili Kassapian in Trieste. Their positions may reflect mainstream anthroposophist attitudes toward assimilation, which were not shared by all anthroposophists. Schwarz was President of the Milan section of the Anthroposophical Society from 1933 onward and had translated various anthroposophist works into Italian.⁷⁷ Kassapian was titular President of the Anthroposophical Society in Italy from 1931 onward, as well as head of the Trieste branch of the Society; other Trieste anthroposophists came from Jewish origins as well.⁷⁸ While the Fascist authorities categorically affirmed their good political conduct, the presence of Jews in anthroposophical ranks in Trieste does seem to have played a role in the Trieste group's dissolution in September 1938, in the immediate aftermath of the enactment of the racial laws.⁷⁹ This incident has sometimes been cited

⁷⁵ See e.g. Rudolf Steiner, *Scienza naturale e scienza dello spirito* (Milan: Bocca, 1942); Rudolf Steiner, *I caposaldi dell'economia* (Milan: Bocca, 1942); and Rudolf Steiner, *Miti e misteri dell'Egitto* (Milan: Bocca, 1943).

⁷⁶ Examples include Guenther Wachsmuth, *Le forze eteriche plasmatici nel cosmo, nella terra e nell'uomo* (Todi: Atanor, 1929); E. Pfeiffer, *La fertilità della terra* (Milan: La Prora, 1938); Ernst Uehli, *La nascita dell'individualità dal mito come esperienza artistica di Riccardo Wagner* (Milan: Bocca, 1939); F. Dreidax, *Il coltivare nel vivente: Introduzione al metodo bio-dinamico* (Pergine: Torgler, 1939); Lidia Baratto, *Euritmia: La nuova arte del movimento creata da Rudolf Steiner* (Milan: Bocca, 1939); M. K. Schwarz, *La frutticoltura secondo il metodo di coltivazione bio-dinamico* (Pergine: Torgler, 1940); 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).

⁷⁷ Schwarz (1876-1947) was also a well-known children's author. After the race laws were imposed she moved to Switzerland, returning to Italy in 1945. For an anthroposophical portrait see the reminiscence by Pappacena, *Di alcuni cultori della Scienza dello Spirito*, 123-28.

⁷⁸ The Società Antroposofica d'Italia was founded in Trieste on January 18, 1931, with Kassapian in the office of President, but all of the paperwork was prepared and submitted by the Secretary, Ettore Martinoli, also from Trieste. See the application, statutes, and related documents in ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

⁷⁹ A memorandum from the Prefect of Trieste, December 20, 1938, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317, reports that the local Trieste anthroposophist group dissolved in September 1938 and that many of its approximately 60 members were Jewish, including its president, Maria Kassapian. The closing sentence

to portray the Anthroposophical Society in Trieste as a victim of Fascist antisemitic legislation.⁸⁰ The actual situation, however, was more complicated. The Trieste branch appears to have dissolved itself, rather than being closed by the authorities.⁸¹ More importantly, one of the central figures in Trieste's anthroposophist milieu, and in the Italian anthroposophical movement overall, was a committed antisemite and a voluble advocate of 'spiritual racism.'

Ettore Martinoli (1895-1958), a Trieste lawyer and long-time anthroposophist, was the founding Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in Italy in 1931 and continued to promote Steiner's work throughout the Fascist period, publishing a lengthy celebration of Steiner and anthroposophy in a prominent Fascist journal in 1943.⁸² Martinoli was an active Fascist from the movement's beginnings in the wake of WWI, and an enthusiastic supporter of the racial laws promulgated in 1938. He was the director of an antisemitic institute in Trieste, the Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem, and later served as chief of the press and propaganda division in the Fascist racial bureaucracy. His role in the 1938 dissolution of the Trieste anthroposophist group remains unclear.⁸³ Martinoli was effusive in his praise for Fascism, referring to

reads: "Tanto la Kassapian che gli ex soci non hanno mai dato luogo a rilievi con la loro condotta morale e politica."

⁸⁰ This somewhat misleading interpretation of events can be traced in part to the insufficiently critical analysis presented in Beraldo's path-breaking article, which has in turn influenced a major scholarly study of Fascist antisemitism. Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), writes: "In September 1938 the important Trieste chapter of the Italian Anthroposophic Society, consisting primarily of Jewish members, ceased its activities" (157; the corresponding footnote on 355 cites Beraldo, "Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista," as the sole source).

⁸¹ This conclusion is supported by the documentary evidence in ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317, and Beraldo finds it the more plausible explanation as well; cf. "Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista," 158. A letter from the Prefect of Trieste to DGPS, August 6, 1941, reports merely that "the local Anthroposophical Society" "was dissolved" in September 1938 (ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317).

⁸² I examine this article and Martinoli's other works in detail in the next chapter.

⁸³ Beraldo, "Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista," 176, portrays Martinoli as a friend of the Jews. This is a severe distortion, as the following chapter will make clear. It does, however, raise the question of how Martinoli, a vociferous antisemite, served as a leader of the Trieste branch of the Anthroposophical Society, with its sizeable Jewish membership. My research has not produced a satisfying answer to this question. Historian Marco Pasi has suggested (private

Mussolini in 1940 as “the genius of the millennium.”⁸⁴ Like other Italian anthroposophists, Martinoli emphasized the spiritual aspects of Fascism and made this a centerpiece of his work. He was a member of the editorial board of the Milan-based Fascist monthly journal *Tempo di Mussolini* and published extensively on spiritual themes and particularly on Fascist mysticism.⁸⁵

Martinoli was also an important collaborator of the ‘School of Fascist Mysticism’ in Milan.⁸⁶ He took part in the February 1940 National Conference on Fascist Mysticism and gave a presentation on the importance of mysticism in the Fascist revolution.⁸⁷ Established in 1930, the School of Fascist Mysticism was one of the more conspicuous promoters of the spiritual elements of Italian Fascism. The school and its journal *Dottrina Fascista* enjoyed Mussolini’s avid support.⁸⁸ From 1938 onward it offered a special series of courses on racial education, and published works on both the Italian and German racial laws.⁸⁹ In 1940 the school sponsored a

communication, February 2010) the plausible thesis that tensions around Martinoli’s stance may have contributed to the dissolution of the Trieste branch after the implementation of the race laws.

⁸⁴ Ettore Martinoli, *Liriche e canti* (Trieste: Trani, 1940), 38. See also Ettore Martinoli, *Finlandia: Carne moderno* (Trieste: Trani, 1940), which includes similar hymns of praise to Mussolini.

⁸⁵ See e.g. Alfredo Acito and Ettore Martinoli, “In tema di formulazione di una nuova sintesi spirituale” *Tempo di Mussolini* January 1941, 1058-67.

⁸⁶ A recent sympathetic study of the School of Fascist Mysticism, authored by a follower of Evola, discusses Martinoli’s role in a variety of contexts; see Tomas Carini, *Niccolò Giani e la Scuola di Mistica Fascista 1930-1943* (Milan: Mursia, 2009), 39, 124-26, 212, 225. The standard scholarly account is Daniele Marchesini, *La scuola dei gerarchi. Mistica fascista: storia, problemi, istituzioni* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976).

⁸⁷ Marchesini, *La scuola dei gerarchi*, 178. The title of Martinoli’s presentation was “Valore e funzione della mistica nella dinamica della rivoluzione fascista.” For thorough documentation of the February 1940 Convegno nazionale di mistica fascista in Milan see *ibid.* 164-87. Evola also gave a presentation, titled “Sul concetto di mistica fascista e sui rapporti con la dottrina della razza” (*ibid.* 183), which was reprinted in the March 1940 issue of the School’s journal, *Dottrina Fascista*.

⁸⁸ See e.g. the official report on the “Attività della Scuola di Mistica Fascista nell’anno XVIII” in *Dottrina Fascista* January 1941, 226-48, which begins with a ringing endorsement of the School and its work by the Duce (226-27), emphasizing the crucial importance of “mysticism” and “the life of the spirit.”

⁸⁹ One important example is Renzo Sertoli Salis, *Le leggi razziali italiane* (Milan: Scuola di Mistica Fascista, 1940). See also ‘Arthos’ (Evola), “Sul significato razziale della mistica fascista” *La Vita Italiana* April 1940, 397-405, and Leoni Franzi, “Originalità del razzismo italiano” *Dottrina Fascista* May 1939, 166-71.

contest for the best new volume on Fascist racism.⁹⁰ Its focus on race extended into 1942.⁹¹

In 1940 Martinoli published a book on Fascist mysticism, employing anthroposophical vocabulary but without explicit reference to Steiner.⁹² Martinoli quoted Mussolini copiously throughout the text. 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 the new history of Europe."⁹³ The introductory chapter discussed "Fascism as a spiritual fact," explaining that "Fascism is a counterattack of the spirit against the materialism of the nineteenth century." Martinoli described Fascism as "a true movement of spiritual counter-attack" and proclaimed that "the principle of hierarchy" was a "necessary element of any human society based on spiritual foundations."⁹⁴ These beliefs were underscored by Martinoli's dedicated adherence to Fascist racial doctrine. He was one of several Italian anthroposophists who promoted a synthesis of spirituality and racism within a Fascist worldview. Comparatively minor incidents bear out the point. In a letter to *Regime Fascista* in October 1938, in the early phase of the racial campaign, Rinaldo Küfferle emphasized that Rudolf Steiner was "purest Aryan." Küfferle described himself as a "Catholic Aryan Fascist."⁹⁵

Even antifascist anthroposophists devoted considerable attention to racial themes. One of the last works that Colonna di Cesarò authored, a lengthy book on the

⁹⁰ Details reported in *Dottrina Fascista* January 1941, 241-42. The winning title, out of 24 submissions, was Enzo Leoni, *Mistica del razzismo fascista* (Milan: Scuola di Mistica Fascista, 1941).

⁹¹ The January 1942 issue of *Dottrina Fascista* carried a 22 page supplement, dated December 1941, titled "Atti della Scuola di Mistica Fascista." The text emphasizes the school's ongoing work on "the racial element" and "the Jewish problem" (6), and lists many of its publications on race (12-13).

⁹² Ettore Martinoli, *Funzione della mistica nella rivoluzione fascista* (Trieste: Trani, 1940).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13, 45, 56.

⁹⁵ Rinaldo Küfferle, letter to editor, *Regime Fascista* October 5, 1938, 3. The letter itself is dated Rome, September 30, 1938. Küfferle also stresses his agreement with the political viewpoint of Roberto Farinacci, the paper's editor.

mysteries of ancient Rome published in November 1938, contains ample material on race.⁹⁶ 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 emphatically 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" and described "the savage populations of Africa and Australia" as "degenerated races."⁹⁷ In sharp contrast to Martinoli, however, Colonna maintained a philosemitic position and did not contribute to anthroposophical antisemitism.

Other anthroposophist authors adopted stances similar to Martinoli's. One important example is the writer and art critic Aniceto del Massa (1898-1975), a well-known figure in artistic circles in Florence. Del Massa fought in WWI and gravitated to the Fascist movement at an early stage. His autobiographical texts emphasize his active involvement in Fascist ranks from the very beginning of Mussolini's blackshirts.⁹⁸ A committed esotericist, by the early 1920s he was a student of Steiner's 'spiritual science' and remained attached to anthroposophy throughout his life.⁹⁹ A 1941 collection of his artistic and philosophical writings referred to Steiner and anthroposophy in its opening pages.¹⁰⁰ Del Massa also collaborated with fellow esotericists Evola and Reghini from 1923 onward and took part in the esoteric *Ur* group in the late 1920s. He was a dedicated Fascist throughout the entire Fascist era, and indeed into the post-war era as well. Like Martinoli, Del Massa was also a vocal antisemite and served as a prominent official in the Centers for the Study of the Jewish

⁹⁶ G. A. Colonna di Cesarò, *Il 'Mistero' delle Origini di Roma* (Milan: La Prora, 1938).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 74, 52.

⁹⁸ Aniceto del Massa, *Pagine esoteriche* (Trent: La Finestra, 2001), 28-29.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 44, 52, 75, 90-94. Cf. Beraldo, "Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista," 151, who describes Del Massa as a "sympathizer of Steiner."

¹⁰⁰ Aniceto del Massa, *Cronache: Uomini e idee* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1941), 5-6.

Problem in the early 1940s. He published a collection of his antisemitic works in 1944.¹⁰¹ Del Massa's career during the Fascist period is another instance of anthroposophical integration of spirituality and racism in an Italian context.

The most significant individual in this regard, however, was an anthroposophist author who is today much more renowned than Martinoli or Del Massa. The foremost Italian anthroposophist in the latter half of the twentieth century was Massimo Scaligero (1906-1980), a celebrated spiritual figure who is widely admired among anthroposophists in Italy and elsewhere and enjoys a very positive reputation in the esoteric milieu more broadly.¹⁰² In December 2006, the Italian Anthroposophical Society held a conference in Trieste in honor of Scaligero on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of his birth, honoring his life and work.¹⁰³ Such encomia do not take account of Scaligero's voluminous publications from the Fascist era.¹⁰⁴ Indeed both anthroposophical sources and scholarly sources deny Scaligero's

¹⁰¹ I examine these and other texts by Del Massa in the next chapter.

¹⁰² The Anthroposophic Press, which publishes some of his work in English translation, 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." (SteinerBooks catalogue 2008) Massimo Scaligero was the pen name of Antonio Massimo Sgabelloni, also spelled Scabelloni. His autobiography is Massimo Scaligero, *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce* (Rome: Perseo, 1972). For a compendium of reverential contributions by Scaligero's followers after his death see Fausto Belfiori, ed., *Massimo Scaligero: Il coraggio dell'impossibile* (Rome: Tilopa, 1982).

¹⁰³ His major 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, *Segreti dello spazio e del tempo* (Rome: Tilopa, 1964); Scaligero, *Magia sacra: Una via per la reintegrazione dell'uomo* (Rome: Tilopa, 1966); Scaligero, *La logica contro l'uomo: Il mito della scienza e la via del pensiero* (Rome: Tilopa, 1967); Scaligero, *Reincarnazione e karma* (Rome: Edizioni mediterranee, 1976); Scaligero, *Die Logik als Widersacher des Menschen: Der Mythos der Wissenschaft und der Weg des Denkens* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1991); Scaligero, *Traktat über das lebende Denken: Ein Weg zur Überwindung der abendländischen Philosophien, des Yoga und des Zen* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1993); Scaligero, *The Light: An Introduction to Creative Imagination* (Great Barrington: Lindisfarne Books, 2001).

¹⁰⁴ Scaligero himself insisted in his autobiography that he was never interested in or involved in politics and tried to intervene against the racist campaign; his claims are completely incompatible with the historical record. Cf. Scaligero, *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce*, 92-97. Even here, Scaligero maintained "the ethical validity of the positions I held" in the Fascist era (93) and stressed: "I still believe the same things about race that I believed back then." (96)

involvement in Fascist politics and in the antisemitic and racist campaign launched in 1938.¹⁰⁵ This is somewhat surprising, since standard historical accounts have noted Scaligero's role for decades.¹⁰⁶ The confusion surrounding Scaligero and his stance during the Fascist era calls for a more in-depth treatment.

Scaligero began writing for the Fascist press in the early 1930s, when he was a young man. Several of his earliest essays appeared in *Critica Fascista* in 1931.¹⁰⁷ He published in *Gioventù Fascista* in 1932 and 1933.¹⁰⁸ Spiritual concerns were a consistent element throughout his work during the Fascist era. Scaligero envisioned a "fascist spirituality" in a front-page article in *Regime Fascista* in August 1938.¹⁰⁹ Racial themes appeared in his Fascist writings as early as January 1935.¹¹⁰ Scaligero's mentor for much of the Fascist period was the established esoteric author Evola, whom he first met in 1930. His long-term association with Evola, and the latter's

¹⁰⁵ The standard anthroposophist biography in von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 695-96, claims that Scaligero "was never politically involved, and certainly not involved in fascist politics." (696) Some scholarly sources mimic these denials. Massimo Introvigne, "Scaligero, Massimo" in Hanegraaff, ed., *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* vol. II, 1038-39, writes: "A favourable review of one of Evola's works on race later caused Colazza's young disciple (who had now adopted the pen name of Massimo Scaligero) to be occasionally counted, after World War II, among those intellectuals who supported Fascist anti-Semitism. Actually Scaligero was not particularly interested in Fascist politics at that time, although he later wrote, in the 1960s, several books criticizing Marxism and counted among his students several young right-wing intellectuals." (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 racist and antisemitic publications.

¹⁰⁶ As one example among many, Silvio Bertoldi, *Salò: Vita e morte della Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1976), 395, identifies Scaligero as a major supporter of the Fascist racial campaign and race laws. Indeed Scaligero is mentioned consistently throughout the literature on Fascist racism, as the following chapter will illustrate. This discrepancy indicates the gulf that still separates scholars of esotericism from historians of fascism and scholars of racial thought.

¹⁰⁷ See e.g. Massimo Scaligero, "Pericolo di un mito contemporaneo" *Critica Fascista* July 15, 1931, 268-69. This early article already employs esoteric terminology and concepts. It praises "the Fascist spirit" as the bulwark against materialism, democracy, and collectivism, and hails Fascism as the bearer of "that luminous spirituality which is the principal characteristic of superior civilizations." Scaligero cites Alfred Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century* and Arthur de Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*.

¹⁰⁸ On Scaligero's early journalism in Fascist youth organs see Luca La Rovere, *Storia dei Guf: Organizzazione, politica e miti della gioventù universitaria fascista 1919-1943* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), 193, 212, 224.

¹⁰⁹ Massimo Scaligero, "La scuola della gerarchia" *Regime Fascista* August 14, 1938, 1.

¹¹⁰ See Massimo Scaligero, "Funzione fascista dell'arte" from *Regime Fascista* January 1935, reprinted in Marco Tarchi, ed. *Diorama* (Rome: Edizioni Europa, 1974), 221-23.

sometimes combative relationship with Steiner and his followers, have complicated efforts to determine when Scaligero turned decisively toward anthroposophy.¹¹¹ In the 1920s and 1930s Evola was at times quite critical of anthroposophy as a rival form of esotericism, but maintained good relationships with various Italian anthroposophists.¹¹² In the eyes of Fascist authorities, such distinctions sometimes seemed trivial, and Evola was occasionally classified as an anthroposophist himself.¹¹³

The course of Scaligero's dual affiliation with Evola and anthroposophy is thus difficult to trace with precision. One plausible hypothesis is that Scaligero developed from an acolyte of Evola into an anthroposophist from the mid-1930s to the early 1940s. This analysis is consistent with Scaligero's published work during the period in question, and is supported by several retrospective anthroposophical sources.¹¹⁴

Scaligero's first article in Preziosi's journal *La Vita Italiana* in July 1937 was a long

¹¹¹ For Evola's early views on anthroposophy see Julius Evola, "Che cosa vuole l'antroposofia di Rudolf Steiner" *Ignis* July 1925, 185-96, reprinted in modified form as "Critica dell'Antroposofia" in Julius Evola, *Maschera e volto dello spiritualismo contemporaneo* (Turin: Bocca, 1932), 79-93. This text is a harsh attack on anthroposophy. For Evola's retrospective adjustment of his views see Evola, *Il cammino del cinabro*, 69, 125-26. For context see Marco Rossi, "L'interventismo politico-culturale delle riviste tradizionaliste negli anni venti" *Storia contemporanea* 18 (1987), 457-504, especially 490-91, and 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. A mixed anthroposophist review of Evola's work, including both praise and criticism, can be found in Johannes Leibl, "Deuter der Vorzeit – Propheten des Unterganges" *Das Goetheanum* April 18, 1943, 122-23.

¹¹² For positive references to Steiner in the work of the *Ur* group, which Evola co-founded with other esoteric authors (including Colazza, under the pseudonym 'Leo'), see Gruppo di Ur, eds., *Introduzione alla magia quale scienza dell'io* vol. II (Rome: Bocca, 1955), 200-01, reprinted from the journals *Ur* and *Krur* 1927-29.

¹¹³ For example, a February 11, 1930 political police report on the legal confrontation between Evola and Reghini (in which Colazza appeared as a witness for Evola, while Del Massa appeared as witness for Reghini) portrays Evola as close to anthroposophy: "Relazione sul processo Evola-Reghini" ACS Pol. Pol. b. 1105 fasc. pers. Reghini Arturo. A February 25, 1930 report on Evola described him as the Italian representative of "the Swiss sect of Steinerites." (ACS Pol. Pol. b. 467 fasc. pers. Evola Julius)

¹¹⁴ According to Scaligero's follower Enzo Erra, Scaligero was an anthroposophist by 1940; see Erra in Belfiori, ed., *Massimo Scaligero*, 67. The text by "Amleto Scabellone" in the same volume dates Scaligero's turn to anthroposophy to the spring of 1941 (*ibid.*, 34). Scaligero's disciple Andrea Federici discerns the influence of Steiner's work in Scaligero's racial publications from 1939; see Federici, "Massimo Scaligero e la maya politica" *Graal: Rivista di scienza dello Spirito* December 2004, 194. Scaligero discusses his development from Evola to Steiner in chapter 3 of his autobiography (see Scaligero, *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce*, 35-41 in particular), but provides no dates or chronological indicators.

homage to Evola, including a significant amount of racial material.¹¹⁵ By 1943, he pointed in the same venue toward a synthesis of Evolian Traditionalism with anthroposophical esotericism.¹¹⁶ Many of his publications during the intervening years combined Evolian and anthroposophist themes and terminology. It was Evola who first introduced Scaligero to anthroposophy and initiated his acquaintance with Colazza.¹¹⁷

According to Scaligero's own testimony, however, he was in fact drawn to anthroposophy all along, during his intensive early collaboration with Evola, rather than shifting gradually from Evola to Steiner. His ex post facto statements emphasize the point: "In reality I always felt connected to Steiner and his esoteric teachings."¹¹⁸ Other sources agree that Scaligero was "a devoted Anthroposophist throughout his entire life."¹¹⁹ There is contemporary textual support for this claim as well; anthroposophical vocabulary can be found in his writings as early as 1938. The matter may be intractable on such grounds, however; even after 1945, when he became a prominent anthroposophist author, Scaligero rarely referred to Steiner explicitly in print.¹²⁰ On the basis of the available evidence, then, both possibilities remain credible: that Scaligero's ideological transformation from Evolian to anthroposophist took place between roughly 1937 and 1941, and that he was already an anthroposophist by the mid-1930s.

¹¹⁵ Massimo Scaligero, "La saggezza 'antimoderna' e il suo significato nella cultura fascista" *La Vita Italiana* July 1937, 62-74. Here Scaligero declares that Fascism is the only thing that can revitalize the Imperial Roman tradition.

¹¹⁶ Massimo Scaligero, "Scienza dello Spirito contro sovversivismo occulto" *La Vita Italiana* March 1943, 256-60. The article does not name Evola or Steiner explicitly.

¹¹⁷ Scaligero, *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce*, 62-63, 80-81. For context see the sympathetic account by Evola's follower Gianfranco de Turris, "Massimo Scaligero e Julius Evola" in Belfiori, ed., *Massimo Scaligero*, 120-33. These reports contradict the claim by Introvigne, "Scaligero, Massimo," that Scaligero was first a follower of Colazza before meeting Evola.

¹¹⁸ Scaligero, *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce*, 79: "In realtà io mi sono sempre sentito congiunto con Steiner e con il suo insegnamento esoterico."

¹¹⁹ Introvigne, "Scaligero, Massimo," 1039.

¹²⁰ His best known anthroposophical work, for example, does not mention Steiner by name: Massimo Scaligero, *La luce: Introduzione all'immaginazione creatrice* (Rome: Tilopa, 1963).

Scaligero's importance does not lie in the details of his affiliation with Evola's esoteric Traditionalism or Steiner's spiritual science, but in his ardent and abundantly documented participation in the Fascist racial campaign, in articulating and elaborating an occult style of antisemitic rhetoric with pronounced political implications.¹²¹ His works from the Fascist period combined a spiritual view of race with a markedly aesthetic emphasis, a vision of cultural renewal and life-affirming creativity as essential aspects of the racist project. Such lofty aspirations formed a crucial part of his racial writings. A representative passage reads:

Fascism, constructing an aerial bridge between culture and life, ennobling thought with the virility of action, has from the very beginning created a substantially new aspiration for the formation of the race. Since for Fascism there is no separation between knowledge and labor, culture must necessarily become the deepest formative force of the ethnic element. In the midst of the muddled contrast of scientific sterility and spiritual subversion which afflicts the modern world, Fascism is creating the possibility of a new era in which we see a revival of beauty, wisdom, and a new poetry, together with creative thought, the rainbow-colored freshness of images and actions that are not contaminated by rhetoric; this creative sense of culture, which is style and way of life, constitutes one of the essential principles of our racism.¹²²

Apocalyptic tones formed the counterpart to these grand ambitions. Scaligero's works promoted "the defense and veneration of those racial energies which alone can guarantee the people's resistance" and declared that "the mission of the racist ethic" was "the only force which can oppose the enormous decadence of modern civilization, presaged in ancient traditions which also speak of one unique race, of the 'masters of

¹²¹ The sole police file on Scaligero consists of a single page from the brief interregnum after the fall of Mussolini's first regime in mid-1943, produced just days before German troops occupied central and northern Italy. The document, an unsigned memorandum dated Rome, September 6, 1943, indicates that Scaligero continued his Fascist activities even when they were officially out of favor. The memorandum describes Scaligero's "advanced Fascist sentiments," his racial publications, and his contacts with German officials, and says that he is still conducting "skillful propaganda on behalf of Fascism." ACS Pol. Pol. b. 1223 fasc. pers. Scaligero Massimo.

¹²² Massimo Scaligero, "La razza e lo spirito della Rivoluzione" *La Vita Italiana* May 1939, 601-05; quote on 602.

destiny', who alone will survive the end of this cycle."¹²³ For Scaligero, the Aryan race was "the race that can consider itself the model of humankind," the race in which "the formative forces of the Divine most fully manifest their creative will."¹²⁴ He saw the potential fulfillment of this promise in the military and spiritual triumph of Fascism and Nazism:

The victory of the totalitarian principle of Fascism and National Socialism by force of arms reveals to the world something that transcends immediate events. [...] The collapse of the old Europe in a clash of iron and fire does not signify a quest for new material prosperity for those who still have not learned harsh and holy sacrifice, but a spiritual integration of the forces of a united occidental civilization and unique Aryan race, the advent of a Romano-Germanic spirituality that can truly restore to mankind the vision of the sacred and eternal.¹²⁵

Scaligero combined this vision of a revived and invigorated Aryan race as the salvation of humankind with a categorical rejection of the supposed adversary of noble Aryan values and Aryan spirituality: the Jews.

When the ethnographers and the historians rediscover at the origins of Rome different peoples and races, when they tell us of Ligurians who come from the north, of Sicilians who display Mediterranean ethnic characteristics and traditions, of Etruscans and Pelasgians and Italics, of Aryan peoples encountering Mediterranean peoples, it is impossible not to recognize in these ethnic branches an individuality of the 'Aryan' type, produced by the absolute absence of Semitic contamination, let alone Jewish contamination. This is fundamental for the history of the Aryan occidental race. What is needed today is an understanding of the profound difference that separates Mediterranean man (Minoan-Mycenaean-Hellenic-Italic) from Semitic man (Phoenician-Chaldean-Assyrian-Hebraic). For centuries they fought against one another in the ancient Mediterranean with various weapons. Mediterranean man recapitulates in himself the hero and the priest, he bears the 'Apollonian' spirit, the classic, 'solar' spirit; while Semitic man is the

¹²³ Massimo Scaligero, "Fine di una civiltà e nascita di una razza" *La Vita Italiana* January 1940, 32-39; quote on 39.

¹²⁴ Massimo Scaligero, "Limiti alla comprensione del problema razzista" *La Vita Italiana* September 1941, 255-63; quotes on 261.

¹²⁵ Massimo Scaligero, "Funzione occidentale della nuova civiltà romano-germanica" *La Vita Italiana* February 1941, 152-57; quote on 157.

merchant, the nomad, the invader, bearer of obscure ‘Telluric’ cults and of a sensualistic-individualistic religion. [...] It is these Italian racial values with their perennial character, whether in the sense of civilization or in a strict biological sense, that have resurfaced in the heroic spiritual climate of the Great War and the Fascist Revolution: Today, through the new racist campaign, they provide impulses toward the fertile union of the Aryan sub-races for the unified and integral reconstitution of the ancient inextinguishable ‘solar’ race.¹²⁶

For Scaligero, only a “spiritual conception of race” conjoined with “the mysticism of Fascism” could preserve “the perennial values of the blood.”¹²⁷ Spiritual vigor and racial vigor were inherently linked:

To build the spirit means to prepare the real power of the race. The habitual rhetoricians will have to take heed of this, the ones who think they can dialectically liquidate the Roman spiritual Tradition. For our Tradition is a pure Aryan heritage, the ‘solar’ legacy of Imperial Rome, whose essence is anti-egalitarian, antisemitic, heroic, but at the same time mystical and ascetic. There is no heroism without asceticism, and there is no assertion of the race without spiritual action.¹²⁸

These facets of Scaligero’s work, and similar works produced by Del Massa and Martinoli, provide a key insight into the ways that racist thinkers perceived their own stance. In addition to the negative and exclusionary component of racism, they highlighted a ‘positive’ racism as an inspiring vision of spiritual revitalization. They demanded, moreover, that racism must 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.

The active involvement of several anthroposophists in the racial politics of Italian Fascism raises a series of questions about the interpretation and application of

¹²⁶ Massimo Scaligero, “Omogeneità e continuità della razza italiana” *La Difesa della Razza* June 5, 1939, 38-40; quotes on 38 and 40. The quoted passages are the opening and closing paragraphs of the text.

¹²⁷ Massimo Scaligero, “Compito eroico dello spirito nell’azione razzista” *La Vita Italiana* September 1939, 327-33; quotes on 331.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 331.

Steiner's teachings. While anthroposophists such as Colonna di Cesarò upheld a philosemitic position and eventually evolved toward an antifascist standpoint, other Italian anthroposophists adopted an aggressively antisemitic perspective and heartily endorsed Fascism. The latter camp of openly racist anthroposophists invoked Steiner only occasionally in their works on race. In some instances their conclusions about race and ethnicity were significantly more radical than those put forward by anthroposophists elsewhere. Even more outspokenly racist German anthroposophists like Richard Karutz did not preach racial principles as drastic as those propounded by Scaligero and Martinoli. These differences reveal significant distinctions between Italian Fascism and German National Socialism and their respective attitudes toward anthroposophy, as well as a noteworthy divergence in the reception of Steiner's racial and ethnic doctrines.¹²⁹

For German anthroposophical race theorists, the 'Aryan' component in Steiner's teachings often took second place to the 'German' component, due to Steiner's own manifest focus on *Deutschtum*. This option was not available to Italian anthroposophical race theorists, whose ideological environment required a concentration on Italian themes. Such considerations may help to explain the emphasis on Aryan tropes, and opposition to Jewishness, which formed a conspicuous part of the work of Scaligero and his colleagues. Because they could not unreservedly endorse the strongly Germanic cast of German, Austrian, and Swiss anthroposophical thinking, some Italian anthroposophists gravitated toward the more broadly racial features of

¹²⁹ Although concrete references to Steiner are rarely to be found in the racial writings of Scaligero, Del Massa, and Martinoli, there are many indications of possible anthroposophical influence, with the important caveat that other esoteric sources, such as Evola or the Ur group, may have been involved as well. Such indications include the use of theosophical vocabulary while condemning English theosophy; discussion of the 'I' and the tripartite nature of the human organism, as well as "sub-races" and racial and ethnic "missions"; references to the Jews as Ahrimanic and part of the 'southern stream' of humankind; quotations of Goethe's adage "blood is a very special fluid," which Steiner adopted for his own racial theories; denunciations of materialism in the name of a 'science of the spirit'; and frequent mention of Hyperboreans, Lemurians, Atlanteans, and Aryans as racial categories.

Steiner's teachings, taking up his variant of the Aryan myth in particular, while simultaneously highlighting the ostensible contrast between Jewish and Aryan racial-spiritual factors. Steiner's work may have seemed more suited to such a project, in an Italian context, than other varieties of occult racial thought circulating at the time. Ariosophy, for example, presented a number of obstacles for would-be Italian appropriators. Esoterically inclined Italian race theorists could not easily embrace the work of Guido List, for instance, 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."¹³⁰ These contextual factors may have rendered anthroposophy more appealing for Italian esotericists seeking a framework for integrating racial and spiritual elements, and may have facilitated the adoption of anthroposophical tropes into the Fascist variety of spiritual racism.

The specific contributions made by Martinoli, Del Massa, and Scaligero to the Fascist racial campaign between 1938 and 1945 will be examined in detail in the following chapter. Their involvement in Fascist politics did not end in 1945, however. Both Aniceto del Massa and Massimo Scaligero played significant roles in the development of the Italian neo-fascist movement during the post-war period.¹³¹ Del Massa was a prominent figure in far-right circles from the final collapse of the Fascist regime through the 1960s. He was a high-profile protagonist of the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* or MSI, the chief organizational inheritor of the Fascist political project and the primary neo-fascist party in Italy for five decades. Del Massa was an editor at *Il*

¹³⁰ List, *Die Ursprache der Ario-Germanen und ihre Mysteriensprache*, 29.

¹³¹ Much of the information on anthroposophist engagement in the Italian neo-fascist milieu comes from sympathetic sources and first-hand accounts by participants in the post-war extreme right. The subject warrants critical attention from scholars interested in the intersections of esotericism and politics. As it exceeds the chronological boundaries of the present study, I will give only a brief overview here, with citations of some of the more informative works worth examining further.

Secolo d'Italia, the MSI newspaper, until 1961.¹³² Scaligero was, along with Evola, a leader of the influential spiritualist current within the Italian extreme right, even while keeping a rarefied distance from direct political participation.¹³³ He served as mentor to the radical youth groups that formed the far right wing of the MSI, as well as the spectrum of underground factions further to the right of the MSI. Scaligero was instrumental in introducing esoteric views into the militant sectors of the neo-fascist movement, and profoundly shaped the longstanding interest in anthroposophy within Italian ultra-right circles.¹³⁴

In part through the mediation of figures like Scaligero, Steiner's work came to have a significant impact on neo-fascist thought in Italy from 1945 onward. Even some of the more notorious leaders of the Italian extreme right, such as Pino Rauti, acknowledged Steiner's influence.¹³⁵ Recalling discussions with fellow intransigent

¹³² 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; Massimo Anderson, *I percorsi della destra* (Naples: Controcorrente, 2003), 57; 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; and Luca La Rovere, *L'eredità del fascismo: Gli intellettuali, i giovani e la transizione al postfascismo, 1943-1948* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008), 195-96.

¹³³ Anthroposophist accounts continue to deny this aspect of Scaligero's career, presenting his stance as a sovereign detachment from the illusions of politics. For a representative example see the multi-part hagiographic portrait by Andrea Federici, "Massimo Scaligero e la maya politica" published in the anthroposophist journal *Graal: Rivista di scienza dello Spirito* from 2004 through 2008.

¹³⁴ Scaligero's role in the post-war far right is discussed in Gianfranco de Turrís, *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; Piero Vassallo, *Le culture della destra italiana* (Milan: Effedieffe, 2002), 92, 128; 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), 71-72, 88, 92, 99, 102, 139, 168, 175; Lembo, *Fascisti dopo la liberazione*, 116; and Baldoni, *La Destra in Italia*, 340, 343, 354-56.

¹³⁵ On Rauti and his milieu see Franco Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy: The Radical Right in Italy after the War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Richard Drake, *The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 1-5, 123-34, 192, 195; Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 96-105; Roy Domenico, *Italian Fascists on Trial, 1943-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,

neo-fascists in the late 1940s, Rauti affirmed: “We were fascinated by anthroposophy and the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, whose major exponent in Rome was Scaligero.”¹³⁶ A variety of other sources corroborate Steiner’s position as an important point of reference for the post-war far right.¹³⁷ A younger generation of anthroposophists, including several of Scaligero’s followers, was also active in neo-fascist circles, such as Pio Filippini-Ronconi, a former officer in the Italian SS division.¹³⁸ The principal member of this second generation of far-right anthroposophists is Enzo Erra, a central participant in the extremist tendencies at the right-wing fringe of the MSI and later an established author in the neo-fascist milieu.¹³⁹ Erra continues to promote anthroposophy and the work of both Steiner and Scaligero.¹⁴⁰

The rightward tendency of leading sectors of Italian anthroposophy after 1945 merits more extended analysis than can be provided here. It may be seen as either a

1991), 223; Eatwell, *Fascism: A History*, 253-69; Rao, *La fiamma e la celtica*, 49-65, 73-84, 151-59, 243-49, 302-07; Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò*, 75-81, 197-208, 219-31, 240-54.

¹³⁶ Interview with Rauti in Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò*, 88. Rauti notes that Scaligero held conferences with him and his comrades and recommended Evola’s works to them.

¹³⁷ Examples include Rao, *Neofascisti*, 39; Streccioni, *A destra della destra*, 209; Vassallo, *Le culture della destra italiana*, 90-92, 128; Lanna and Rossi, *Fascisti immaginari*, 20, 153-56; Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò*, 71-72.

¹³⁸ See e.g. Franco Ferraresi, ed., *La destra radicale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1984), 99-100; Ugo Tassinari, *Fascisteria: Storie, mitografia e personaggi della destra radicale in Italia* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 2008), 20-21; and Rao, *La fiamma e la celtica*, 8-9, 11-13, 84, 366-67. Cf. Filippini-Ronconi’s contribution to Belfiori, ed., *Massimo Scaligero*, 46-54.

¹³⁹ For additional detail on Erra’s role in the radical wing of the neo-fascist movement see 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, 78, 89-90, 95-96, 99; Giuseppe Pardini, *Fascisti in democrazia: Uomini, idee, giornali (1946-1958)* (Florence: Le lettere, 2008), 76, 96, 102-03, 124; Pier Giuseppe Murgia, *Ritorneremo!* (Milan: SugarCo, 1976), 105, 115-16, 127-29; Tomaso Staiti di Cuddia delle Chiuse, *Confessione di un fazioso* (Milan: Mursia, 2006), 51, 83-84, 150, 156-57; Adalberto Baldoni, *Il crollo dei miti* (Rome: Settimo Sigillo, 1996), 25-26, 65-66, 76-77, 83; Ferraresi, ed., *La destra radicale*, 17-19, 27, 43, 194-96; Rao, *Neofascisti*, 19-20, 39-43, 50-57, 67-72, 238-39, 245-46; Streccioni, *A destra della destra*, 63-70; Baldoni, *La Destra in Italia*, 278, 298, 338-44, 348, 355-57, 361-62, 512-13, 518, 530; Vassallo, *Le culture della destra italiana*, 75, 114-15, 141; Lanna and Rossi, *Fascisti immaginari*, 154, 461-62; Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy*, 34, 210-13; de Turrís, *Elogio e Difesa di Julius Evola*, 54-56; Parlato, *Fascisti senza Mussolini*, 177, 238, 298-99, 308; Lembo, *Fascisti dopo la liberazione*, 74, 90-92, 112-16, 125, 129; Tassinari, *Fascisteria*, xi, 2, 51, 71, 432; Rao, *La fiamma e la celtica*, 41-44, 58-63, 73-76, 301-02, 326-27; Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò*, 22-23, 76-98, 130-40, 168-89, 207-08, 239-53.

¹⁴⁰ See Enzo Erra, *Steiner e Scaligero: Due maestri, una via* (Rome: Settimo Sigillo, 2006).

counterpoint to or a continuation of the confused anthroposophical response to the initial rise of Fascism, as well as the divided reaction of various Fascist functionaries to the anthroposophist movement and its representatives. For much of the 1920s and 1930s, after all, relations between organized 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, as we have seen, were openly supportive of or actively involved in Fascist politics during its two-decade reign.

Yet the tensions between Steiner's supporters and the Duce's government also 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, is essential to making sense of the path that Scaligero, Del Massa, and Martinoli chose, and to understanding the intensity and duration of their pro-fascist and antisemitic convictions. The particular profile of anthroposophically influenced 'spiritual racism' in Fascist Italy took shape against the backdrop of a regime whose agents were at times inhospitable to or openly hostile toward anthroposophist ideas and endeavors. The success of some of Steiner's Italian followers in influencing the esoteric inclinations of Fascist racial policy, and in administering its practical implementation, is all the more remarkable in light of these volatile circumstances.

Viewed through the lens of its racial and ethnic theories and the practices that emerged from them, the political contours of modern occultism become both more distinct and more ambiguous. If the history of the occult is a history of implicit and explicit politics, its racial legacy remains perplexing. Although anthroposophy in general did not belong to the overtly right-wing end of the esoteric spectrum in interwar Europe, it found significant points of contact with several strands of Fascist thought and action via partly compatible doctrines about race and nation. Within an

esoteric environment crowded with manifestly racist ideologies, from ariosophy to Evola, anthroposophy by no means seemed the most likely candidate for shaping the policies of a racist regime. Yet its combination of modern scientific vocabulary (epitomized in anthroposophy's self-description as a "spiritual science") with a variety of traditional and irrationalist themes appeared to offer a potent device for both propaganda purposes and practical application once Fascist Italy placed race at the forefront of its concerns. Particularly in an Italian context, re-casting racial discourse by reference to myths of past and future grandeur and beauty provided a powerful catalyst to this transformation of Fascist worldviews. In addition, anthroposophist concepts could serve as a mediator between the pagan and Christian currents within Fascist thought.

Above all, the history of anthroposophical involvement in Fascism sheds a revealing light on Steiner's principles of universalism, and indicates a number of antinomies built into European conceptions of universalism itself, whether in esoteric or conventional modes. Proponents of Fascist racism invoked the rhetoric of universal values while simultaneously preaching the virtues of racial and ethnic particularism, without recognizing a contradiction between the two. Scaligero's work was exemplary in this regard, positing Aryan unity as the route to salvation for the world as a whole. His texts combined modern and anti-modern elements, as Steiner's own work had, and merged religious and biological terminology into a racial idiom that harked back to ancient roots while pointing to a revitalized future. Many of these discussions depended on a series of occult distinctions between the soul and the spirit, the etheric body and the astral body, and an underlying triad of spirit, soul, and body, notions which were in turn imperfectly correlated to ostensibly physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of race. Despite their universal trappings, Scaligero's writings, as well as those of Martinoli and Del Massa, propounded an esoteric vision of the interplay

between bodily and spiritual factors in ways that made their conceptions of nation and race more restrictive and more stringent, rather than more open and lenient.

Such premises help account for the central place of antisemitism within their published works and in their practical endeavors. 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 Italian anthroposophists involved in the racial campaign, however, antisemitic assumptions were fundamental and unequivocal. 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 does help show what was appealing in some quarters about spiritual versions of racial thinking: its idealistic and utopian content, its emphasis on harmony, strength, and beauty, aesthetic grandeur, cultural palingenesis and a vivid and shining future. For authors like Scaligero, “the real power of the race” had finally come into its own in Fascist form, bringing “a revival of beauty, wisdom, and a new poetry,” thus revealing “the essential principles of our racism.”

These remarks from Scaligero’s May 1939 article on “Race and the Spirit of the Revolution” suggest the seductive power of ‘spiritual racism.’ From this point of view, the comparatively late emergence of officially sanctioned antisemitism in Fascist Italy was not merely a matter of growing German influence, but also of a freely adopted ‘German’ inspiration in the form of anthroposophical ideas, which then contributed to a characteristically Italian approach to race. In this and other respects, the experience of Italian anthroposophists differed significantly from that of their fellow anthroposophists in Germany. Italian anthroposophists were not only divided from the start over how to relate to their government, they took opposite sides when the tide turned toward open persecution of Jews. Even as the Fascist regime subjected

anthroposophists to surveillance and included Jewish anthroposophists in antisemitic repression, it also provided prominent platforms to antisemitic anthroposophists to participate in this same repression, and to infuse anthroposophical themes into Fascist racial ideology and policy.

Chapter 8

Italian Anthroposophists and the Fascist Racial Laws, 1938-1945

Whatever their basic orientation toward Fascism, Italian anthroposophists faced a different set of choices and challenges from those encountered by their German counterparts. While German anthroposophists confronted a regime fully committed to a racist program from the beginning, Italian anthroposophists found themselves in a more mercurial situation. Unlike National Socialism, which had all along professed a racial version of antisemitism as one of its core principles, Italian Fascism developed toward an official antisemitic policy over a long period of time through a series of unsteady and 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. Within the complex evolution of Fascist racial ideology and government-sanctioned antisemitism, several prominent Italian anthroposophists came to play a conspicuous role as promoters of “spiritual racism.” This role comprised not only theoretical contributions to a distinctively esoteric version of racial thought, but eventually included practical involvement in the implementation of Fascist racial policy as well. It was in Fascist Italy rather than Nazi Germany that anthroposophist ideas about the spiritual nature of race came to fruition and influenced concrete measures adopted by the state and its organs.

The anthroposophist contribution to Italian Fascism’s racial campaign, and to “spiritual racism” in theory and in practice, centered above all on three figures: Massimo Scaligero, Aniceto del Massa, and Ettore Martinoli. Examining the choices each of these men made between 1938 and 1945 yields new insights into a range of ongoing historiographical debates about the nature and origins of Italian Fascist racism, including debates on the relation between racism and antisemitism, the relation

between Italian and German racial theory and racial legislation, and the relative status of biological and spiritual forms of racism. The history of the anthroposophical role in formulating and implementing Fascist racial policy indicates that this variety of “spiritual racism” amounted to a radicalized version of antisemitism; that the emphasis on Italian racial character was readily compatible with an outspokenly pro-Nazi stance; that spiritual racists promoted a synthesis of biological and spiritual forms of racial discrimination and persecution; and that spiritual racism was no mere theoretical construct, but demanded conspicuously ruthless practical measures and cast its claims far beyond the borders of Italy, insisting that its strictures applied to the whole world. The neglected history of anthroposophist involvement in Fascism’s turn to overt racism reveals a harder edge to seemingly ‘softer’ forms of esoteric racial discourse. This history also shows the extent to which anthroposophists attempted to put their own doctrines into practice as active participants in overseeing and administering Fascist racial policy in the late phases of Mussolini’s regime.

Initially promulgated in September 1938, with additions and amplifications extending into 1943, the Fascist racial laws imposed severe restrictions on Jewish life in Italy. For the first time under Fascist auspices, Italy’s small Jewish community, totaling roughly 50,000 people, faced official discrimination and persecution. Sometimes known collectively as the ‘Laws for Defense of the Race,’ Fascist racial legislation deprived Italian Jews of civil rights, expelled foreign Jews, barred Jews from educational institutions, government service, the armed forces, and the Fascist party, prohibited marriage between Jews and non-Jews, restricted Jewish employment and ownership of property, and established a variety of other onerous sanctions. By 1942 Jews were conscripted into forced labor. Italian Jews were not, however, deported to extermination camps until the German occupation of Italy beginning in September 1943. The Fascist racial laws were preceded and accompanied by a press

and 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 Fascist movement and regime.

This is the historical context within which figures like Scaligero, Del Massa, and Martinoli operated. Assessing their role requires engaging a series of historically contentious topics in the still-developing scholarship on Fascist racism.¹ According to one long-established interpretation, the race laws of 1938 were essentially a product of Italy's alliance with Nazi Germany.² For a number of analysts, the specifically Italian

¹ Useful overviews include Michele Sarfatti, *Mussolini contro gli ebrei: Cronaca dell'elaborazione delle leggi del 1938* (Turin: Zamorani, 1994); 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); for collections of documents, texts of the various laws, etc., see Ugo Caffaz, ed., *Discriminazione e persecuzione degli ebrei nell'Italia fascista* (Florence: Consiglio Regionale della Toscana, 1988), and Alberto Cavaglion and Gian Paolo Romagnani, *Le interdizioni del Duce: Le leggi razziali in Italia* (Turin: Claudiana, 2002). Regional studies include Enzo Collotti, ed., *Razza e fascismo: La persecuzione contro gli ebrei in Toscana 1938-1943* (Rome: Carocci, 1999) and Valerio Marchetti, ed., *L'applicazione della legislazione antisemita in Emilia Romagna* (Bologna: Nove, 1999). For a brief introduction in English see Michele Sarfatti, "Characteristics and objectives of the anti-Jewish racial laws in Fascist Italy, 1938-1943" in Joshua Zimmerman, ed., *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 71-80. Reichardt, "Was mit dem Faschismus passiert ist," 399 observes that a "convincing integration of racism" into a broader model of Fascism as ideology and practice remains "one of the most important desiderata of the theory of Fascism."

² For variations on this theme, with significant differences among them, see above all the classic accounts by Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1961); English translation of the fourth revised edition: Renzo De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History* (New York: Enigma, 2001); Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy 1922-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); A. James Gregor, *The Ideology of Fascism* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 241-82. For an early critique (and partial recuperation) of these arguments see Gene Bernardini, "The Origins and Development of Racial Anti-Semitism in Fascist Italy" *Journal of Modern History* 49 (1977), 431-53; cf. Reiner Pommerin, "Rassenpolitische Differenzen im Verhältnis der Achse Berlin-Rom, 1938-43" *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 27 (1979), 646-60, and Meir Michaelis, "La politica razziale fascista vista da Berlino. L'antisemitismo italiano alla luce di documenti inediti tedeschi (1938-1943)" *Storia contemporanea* 11 (1980), 1003-45. For helpful summaries see Mario Sznajder, "The Fascist Regime, Antisemitism and the Racial Laws in Italy" in Robert Wistrich and Sergio Della Pergola, eds., *Fascist Antisemitism and the Italian Jews* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1995), 19-36; Meir Michaelis, "The Current Debate over Fascist Racial Policy" in *ibid.* 49-96; Wolfgang Wippermann, "War der italienische Faschismus rassistisch?" in Werner Röhr, ed., *Faschismus und Rassismus* (Berlin: Akademie, 1992), 108-22; Enzo Collotti, "Die Historiker und die Rassengesetze in Italien" in Christof Dipper, ed., *Faschismus und Faschismen im Vergleich* (Cologne: SH-Verlag, 1998), 59-77; and Robert Gordon, "Race" in Bosworth, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, 296-316.

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 particularly with the pioneering work of historian Renzo De Felice, holds that Italian antisemitism and ‘spiritual’ forms of racism more generally were preferable to their German counterparts.³ While each of these claims contains an important measure of truth, recent scholarship has challenged much of this account, focusing instead on internal dynamics within the evolution of Fascism itself rather than the impact of the German alliance, as well as on indigenous Italian legacies of racial thinking, and emphasizing that racism and antisemitism were neither marginal to nor external to Italian Fascism.⁴ Above all, the notion that ‘spiritual racism’ was

³ See e.g. De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, vii-viii, xv-xvi, 204, 378-79.

⁴ Excellent surveys of these arguments are available in 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 Brogini, eds., *Antisemitismo in Europa negli anni Trenta: Legislazioni a confronto* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2001), 212-37; Stefano Luconi, “Recent trends in the study of Italian antisemitism under the Fascist regime” *Patterns of Prejudice* 38 (2004), 1-17; and Thomas Schlemmer and Hans Woller, “Der italienische Faschismus und die Juden 1922 bis 1945” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 53 (2005), 165-201. For a comprehensive account see Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*. On Mussolini’s early racist and antisemitic views see Fabre, *Mussolini razzista*. On longstanding antisemitic motifs in Italian culture see Lynn Gunzberg, *Strangers at Home: Jews in the Italian Literary Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), and Wiley Feinstein, *The Civilization of the Holocaust in Italy* (London: Associated University Presses, 2003). For background on racial thought in Italian history see Alberto Burgio, ed., *Nel nome della razza: Il razzismo nella storia d’Italia 1870-1945* (Bologna: Mulino, 1999), and Michele Nani, *Ai confini della nazione: Stampa e razzismo nell’Italia di fine Ottocento* (Rome: Carocci, 2006). See also Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue and Survival* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Mario Toscano, “Marcello Ricci: una testimonianza sulle origini del razzismo fascista” *Storia contemporanea* 27 (1996), 879-89; Juliane Wetzel, “Der Mythos des ‘braven Italiens’: Das faschistische Italien und der Antisemitismus” in Hermann Graml, Angelika Königseder, and Juliane Wetzel, eds., *Vorurteil und Rassenhass: Antisemitismus in den faschistischen Bewegungen Europas* (Berlin: Metropol, 2001), 49-74; 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; Giorgio Fabre, “Uno sconosciuto articolo razzista di Mussolini” *Quaderni di Storia* 65 (2007), 129-77; Alessandro Visani, “The Jewish enemy: Fascism, the Vatican, and anti-Semitism on the seventieth anniversary of the 1938 race laws” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 14 (2009), 168-83.

less invidious and less dangerous than biological racism has come under sustained attack.⁵

These interpretations have opened significant new horizons in the study of the Fascist racial campaign, and provide the backdrop against which the anthroposophical presence within that campaign can best be assessed. The fact that several of Steiner's Italian followers eventually came to occupy prominent positions within the Fascist racial bureaucracy and its propaganda apparatus, and the particular themes they highlighted in their antisemitic writings, supports the recent historiographical trend toward an emphasis on the internal Italian origins of Fascist racial thought while also noting an unusual 'German' influence via anthroposophy. At the same time, several elements of the older scholarly consensus remain relevant. The comparatively modest Italian contribution to the holocaust helps put the activities of Fascism's more outspoken antisemites into perspective, both in contrast to Germans and others who actively participated in the genocide, as well as in contrast to fellow Italians who declined to join in the antisemitic chorus. In addition, Mussolini's shift to overt racism in 1938 was controversial in several different ways; some Fascists initially opposed the race laws and the antisemitic campaign, while others supported the regime's racist turn but disagreed fundamentally on the proper interpretation and implementation of racial theory.

⁵ See for example Mauro Raspanti, "Le correnti del razzismo fascista" in Capelli and Broggin, eds., *Antisemitismo in Europa negli anni Trenta*, 238-51; 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: Studi su razzismo e revisionismo storico* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 1998), 115-33; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 48; Roberto Maiocchi, *Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista* (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1999), 202; Francesco Cassata, *A destra del fascismo: Profilo politico di Julius Evola* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), 12-13. These more perceptive approaches to 'spiritual racism' seem increasingly evident in recent scholarship, as reflected in the presentation on "The Rhetoric of Race in Fascist Italy and Its Echoes Today" by Eden Knudsen of Yale University at the American Historical Association conference on January 3, 2009, and in her forthcoming dissertation "Forming 'Race Consciousness': The Evolution of Italian Fascist Racism."

Taking all of these factors into account, a fuller understanding of the background to the Fascist race laws would include a wide range of contributing and complicating dynamics: Italian-German rivalry in the 1930s, giving way to the Rome-Berlin axis in 1936 and the military alliance in 1939; Fascist perceptions of the Nazis as neophytes; tensions over Austria; Italian and German cooperation in the Spanish civil war and Italy's concurrent distancing from the Western powers; the small number of Italian Jews; the prominence of Jewish members of the Fascist party; Jewish participation in international anti-fascist circles, perceived and real; Mussolini's ambivalent racial views and his beliefs about the power of 'world Jewry'; the Italian-Ethiopian war of 1935-36 and consequent colonial racial legislation; the drive to create a Fascist New Man; the role of anti-bourgeois themes in Fascist thought; the gradual unfolding of Fascism's totalitarian aspirations; the confluence of modern scientific and popular racial theories in Italy as elsewhere; shifting perceptions and treatment of ethnic minorities in Italy; agitation by radical antisemitic elements within the Fascist movement.⁶ The concrete choices made by Scaligero, Del Massa, and Martinoli come into sharper relief when viewed within this complex context.

⁶ For additional context see Gentile, *Fascismo: Storia e interpretazione*, 235-64; Nicola Labanca, "Il razzismo coloniale italiano" in Burgio, ed., *Nel nome della razza*, 145-63; Luigi Goglia, "Note sul razzismo coloniale fascista" *Storia contemporanea* 19 (1988), 1223-66; Angelo Del Boca, "Le leggi razziali nell'impero di Mussolini" in Angelo Del Boca, Massimo Legnani, and Mario Rossi, eds., *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 and Jeffrey Pratt, eds., *The Politics of Recognising Difference* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002), 41-57; Carlo Moos, *Ausgrenzung, Internierung, Deportation: Antisemitismus und Gewalt im späten italienischen Faschismus (1938-1945)* (Zurich: Chronos, 2004); Alexander De Grand, "Mussolini's Follies: Fascism in its Imperial and Racist Phase, 1935-1940" *Contemporary European History* 13 (2004), 127-47; Fabrizio De Donno, "'La Razza Ario-Mediterranea': Ideas of Race and Citizenship in Colonial and Fascist Italy, 1885-1941" *Interventions* 8 (2006), 394-412.

The participation of all three figures in the racial campaign has been noted by scholars before, but has not been systematically examined.⁷ Italian anthroposophist race theorists did not form a discrete bloc or unified faction, and for the most part did not underscore their anthroposophical orientation, mentioning Steiner only rarely. To a large extent, they owed their public profile to a few prominent Fascist patrons, including Roberto Farinacci, a Fascist extremist and vocal antisemite who published the newspaper *Regime Fascista*.⁸ Their most important supporter, however, was Farinacci's colleague Giovanni Preziosi, a Fascist publicist and arguably Italy's most outspoken antisemite from 1920 onward.⁹ Preziosi was not an anthroposophist himself, but had offered sympathetic backing to anthroposophy for decades. He published the journal *La Vita Italiana* and was the chief Italian promoter of the antisemitic forgery 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.'¹⁰ His work was thoroughly conspiracist and filled with extravagant denunciations of Jews, freemasons, democracy, plutocracy, Bolshevism, and other 'enemies of the spirit.'¹¹ Within the Fascist hierarchy, Preziosi was the principal sponsor of the current of *esoteric racism*, a crucial variety of Fascist racial thought which has yet to receive adequate historical

⁷ A representative example is Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, *L'Italie fasciste et la persécution des juifs* (Paris: Perrin, 2007); on Scaligero see 287, 384, 516, 520, 543-44; on Del Massa 384-85, 410, 516, 543; on Martinoli 410, 543.

⁸ For background on Farinacci see Harry Fornari, *Mussolini's Gadfly: Roberto Farinacci* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), particularly chapter 13, "Racism Comes to Italy" (177-89); Matteo Di Figlia, *Farinacci: Il radicalismo fascista al potere* (Rome: Donzelli, 2007); Giuseppe Pardini, *Roberto Farinacci, ovvero della rivoluzione fascista* (Florence: Le lettere, 2007). See also the celebratory portrait of Farinacci by Massimo Scaligero, "La storia della Rivoluzione fascista" *La Nobiltà della Stirpe* April 1938, 38-41. On the role of esoteric and racial themes in Farinacci's newspaper *Regime Fascista* see Francesco Cassata, "Tradizionalismo e razzismo: 'Diorama Filosofico', terza pagina del *Regime Fascista* (1934-1943)" *Razzismo & Modernità* 2 (2002), 32-63.

⁹ There are several very good studies of Preziosi: Canosa, *A caccia di ebrei*; Maria Teresa Pichetto, *Alle radici dell'odio: Preziosi e Benigni antisemiti* (Milan: Angeli, 1983); Luigi Parente, Fabio Gentile, and Rosa Maria Grillo, eds., *Giovanni Preziosi e la questione della razza in Italia* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2005); in the latter volume see Maria Teresa Pichetto, "Le radici ideologiche e culturali dell'antisemitismo di Giovanni Preziosi" (21-45). For a perspicacious early analysis of Preziosi's antisemitism see Joshua Starr, "Italy's Antisemites" *Jewish Social Studies* 1 (1939), 105-24.

¹⁰ On the 'Protocols' in Fascist Italy see Sergio Romano, *I falsi protocolli: Il "complotto ebraico" dalla Russia di Nicola II a oggi* (Milan: Corbaccio, 1992).

¹¹ See Giovanni Preziosi, *Giudaismo Bolscevismo Plutocrazia Massoneria* (Milan: Mondadori, 1941).

analysis.¹² Esoteric racism formed the hard core of the broader phenomenon of ‘spiritual racism’ and contended with more conventionally biological versions of racism for ideological hegemony within the Fascist racial campaign. Among other challenges, Italian esoteric racists faced the daunting task of conjoining the Mediterranean character of their compatriots with the Nordic emphasis of Nazi racial doctrine. These debates among competing strands of racial theory, with frequently shifting alignments, advances, retreats, and truces, commanded considerable attention in the Fascist press between 1938 and 1943.¹³

Spiritual forms of racism abounded during this period. In 1939, for example, in a pamphlet titled *Why we are Antisemites*, the leader of the ‘School of Fascist Mysticism’ declared that “spiritual antisemitism is a duty of every Italian.”¹⁴ Other

¹² The best treatment is the astute pioneering study by Mauro Raspanti, “I razzismi del fascismo” in Centro Furio Jesi, ed., *La menzogna della razza: Documenti e immagini del razzismo e dell'antisemitismo fascista* (Bologna: Grafis, 1994), 73-89; for an updated version of his argument see Raspanti, “Le correnti del razzismo fascista” op. cit. Raspanti identifies three main currents within Italian Fascist racism: biological racism, national racism, and esoteric racism, providing an informative and detailed characterization of each, and noting that all three of them comprised biological elements. Sarfatti, “Il razzismo fascista nella sua concretezza” argues that esoteric racism was the most extreme of these three variants of Fascist racism, with biological racism in the middle, and national racism the most ‘moderate.’ Alberto Cavaglione, “Due modeste proposte” in Burgio, ed., *Nel nome della razza*, 379-86, largely endorses Raspanti’s model but argues that national racism was not really a distinct variety of its own, and that there were thus two main streams, one biological and the other spiritual, the latter needing additional study. Cf. also Alberto Cavaglione, “Maschilità del fascismo: In margine alla questione del ‘razzismo spirituale’” in Parente, Gentile, and Grillo, eds., *Giovanni Preziosi e la questione della razza in Italia*, 347-68; Cavaglione firmly repudiates the notion that spiritual racism was less harmful than biological versions. For further context see Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 189-94, and Centro Furio Jesi, ed., *La menzogna della razza*, 249-65.

¹³ Matard-Bonucci, *L'Italie fasciste et la persécution des juifs*, 294, refers to this as “the minor war of the racists amongst themselves.” A helpful analysis of these debates can be found in Aaron Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Gillette’s primary focus is on the dispute between ‘Mediterraneanists’ and ‘Nordicists’ and gives less attention to debates between spiritual and biological racists. The range of positions was complex, with changing constellations of Mediterranean, Nordic, and Aryan proponents, of biological and spiritual tendencies, of pro-German stances and an emphasis on Italianness, all assembled in various combinations and vying for recognition and support from different elements within the regime. For additional context see Giorgio Israel and Pietro Nastasi, *Scienza e razza nell'Italia fascista* (Bologna: Il mulino, 1998), and Roberto Maiocchi, “Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista” in Roberto Maiocchi, *Scienza e fascismo* (Rome: Carocci, 2004), 139-204.

¹⁴ Niccolò Giani, *Perché siamo antisemiti* (Milan: Scuola di mistica fascista, 1939), 41: “l’antisemitismo spirituale è un dovere di ogni italiano.” Giani cites Ludwig Thieben, *Che cos’è l’Ebraismo* (Milan: I.T.E., 1937), the Italian edition of Ludwig Thieben’s classic anthroposophist

works proclaimed that “the race problem is above all a spiritual problem.”¹⁵ Such statements, however, often relied on nebulous terminology and conceptual vagueness. Purportedly ‘spiritual’ aspects of race could include such mundane matters as linguistic correlations, behavioral traits, religious affiliations, cultural patterns, customs, and so forth.¹⁶ Esoteric racists demanded stricter standards, elevating what they called ‘the spirit of the race’ to the height of racial consciousness and spelling out an elaborate esoterically derived conception of the origins and meaning of race in its various forms, while insisting that the spiritual dimension of racial character determined biological features rather than the other way around. This stance led to fierce confrontations with other schools of racial thought, especially those based on the natural sciences and established ethnological models. Esoteric racism freely invoked occult sources and vocabulary, deriding approaches centered on physical attributes as simple-minded ‘materialism’ incapable of comprehending the true nature of racial difference. According to Preziosi, it was the “Jewish-Masonic school of Italian anthropology” which interpreted race “merely as a simple, brute biological reality” and thus entirely missed its profound spiritual significance.¹⁷

The foremost theorist of the esoteric current of racism was Julius Evola, perhaps the best known esotericist in twentieth-century Italy.¹⁸ Working closely with

statement on the ‘Jewish question,’ translated by Lina Schwarz. I discuss the original German edition of Thieben’s antisemitic book in chapter four.

¹⁵ Roberto Volpe, *Problema della razza e problemi dello spirito* (Salerno: Di Giacomo, 1939), 6.

¹⁶ Examples of this indistinct usage of ‘spiritual’ terminology include Carlo Cechelli, “Valore spirituale dell’idea di razza” *Giornale d’Italia* August 12, 1938, 3; Giovanni Marro, *Caratteri fisici e spirituali della razza italiana* (Rome: Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista, 1939); Giuseppe Maggiore, *Razza e Fascismo* (Palermo: Agate, 1939); Giuseppe Omarini, “Spirito e materiale nel razzismo” *La Nobiltà della Stirpe* February 1939, 1-3. In many contexts, ‘spiritual’ conceptions of race signified little more than taking cultural and historical factors into account. For discussion see Maiocchi, *Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista*, 241-77. Important background on the wider stream of spiritual racism and its institutional anchoring within the Fascist state is also available in Giorgio Fabre’s chapter “Razzismo ‘spirituale’” in Fabre, *L’elenco*, 104-13.

¹⁷ Preziosi, introduction to Julius Evola, “Scienza, razza e scientismo” *La Vita Italiana* December 1942, 556.

¹⁸ There is a large literature on Evola, of widely varying quality. Three of the best analyses, and most relevant to the present study, are Francesco Germinario, *Razza del sangue, razza dello spirito: Julius*

Preziosi, Evola developed an extensive literature on the spiritual grounds for a racist and antisemitic orientation of Fascism, beginning well before the declaration of the racial laws in autumn 1938.¹⁹ His work drew on a wide range of occult teachings, including significant elements adapted from theosophy. Evola's relationship with anthroposophy was strained; he published very sharp criticisms of anthroposophy as an esoteric system, but greatly respected Colonna di Cesarò and Colazza and cooperated amicably with other anthroposophists in the *Ur* group.²⁰ Despite strong disagreements with some of his teachings, Evola held Steiner in high esteem, considering him an Initiate.²¹ In his 1941 book *Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race*, Evola published two photographs of Steiner as a prime example of the Nordic racial type, praising him as representative of fine race features reflecting "spiritual insight" and the "solar element."²² Evola's own occult predilections were generally pagan, anti-Christian, and committed to an austere Traditionalism similar to that of René

Evola, l'antisemitismo e il nazionalsocialismo, 1930-43 (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2001); Cassata, *A destra del fascismo*; and the chapter "Julius Evola and spiritual Nordicism, 1941-1943" in Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, 154-75. Much of the secondary literature on Evola is authored by his followers and admirers and is consistently apologetic, ranging from unquestioningly exegetical to enthusiastically celebratory. Less credulous treatments are available in Dana Lloyd Thomas, *Julius Evola e la tentazione razzista* (Brindisi: Giordano, 2006) and Gianni Scipione Rossi, *Il razzista totalitario: Evola e la leggenda dell'antisemitismo spirituale* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2007). For an indignant Evolian response to Germinario's and Cassata's research see Marco Rossi, *Esoterismo e razzismo spirituale: Julius Evola e l'ambiente esoterico nel conflitto ideologico del Novecento* (Genoa: Name, 2007), a full-fledged apologia for 'spiritual racism.' Rossi's recent effort to vindicate esoteric racism does not detract from the quality of his earlier scholarly articles on Evola, cited in the previous chapter; while clearly sympathetic to their subject, those articles adhered to historiographical standards and contain valuable information on Evola and his milieu.

¹⁹ In September 1937 Evola wrote to the Minister of Popular Culture that he had been trying since 1926 "to give an antisemitic orientation to fascist spirituality." (Evola quoted in Thomas, *Julius Evola e la tentazione razzista*, 144) His works on this theme include Julius Evola, *Tre aspetti del problema ebraico* (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1936); Evola, *Il mito del sangue* (Milan: Hoepli, 1937); Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale* (Naples: Conte, 1941); Evola, "Stirpe e spiritualità" *Vita Nova* July 1931; Evola, "L'internazionale ebraica" *Vita Nova* November 1932; Evola, "Sulle ragioni dell'antisemitismo" *Vita Nova* August 1933; Evola, "Razza e cultura" *Rassegna Italiana* January 1934, 11-16; Evola, "La guerra occulta: Ebrei i massoni alla conquista del mondo" *La Vita Italiana* December 1936, 645-55; Evola, "Gli ebrei in Italia e il vero problema ebraico" *La Vita Italiana* June 1937, 659-68.

²⁰ I discuss this background in the previous chapter.

²¹ Julius Evola, *The Hermetic Tradition* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1995), 111, 207.

²² Julius Evola, *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* (Milan: Hoepli, 1941), 275-76.

Guénon.²³ Though highly critical of several aspects of National Socialist race theory, Evola admired many facets of Nazism, and of the SS in particular, and spent much of the 1930s and 1940s in Germany and Austria cultivating contacts with the German right.²⁴ He was particularly eager to work with Himmler's *Ahnenerbe*, and when Allied forces entered Rome in 1944, Evola fled to Vienna and spent the final year of the war working with the SS.

Evola advocated a "totalitarian racism" encompassing body, soul, and spirit.²⁵ This model combined esoteric ideas about the tripartite nature of the human being and the spiritual foundation of race with a radical stance in the 'battle against Jewry.' According to Evola and his esoteric colleagues, limiting the view of race to the physical body alone 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 spirit and the Aryan spirit.²⁶ For roughly a year,

²³ An informative but insufficiently critical survey of Guénon's and Evola's thought can be found in Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); a less detailed but somewhat more discerning treatment is available in Patricia Chiantera-Stutte, *Von der Avantgarde zum Traditionalismus: Die radikalen Futuristen im italienischen Faschismus von 1919 bis 1931* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2002). For an unpersuasive argument that Evola was not a fascist thinker, see A. James Gregor, "The Initiatic Racism of Julius Evola" in Gregor, *Mussolini's Intellectuals: Fascist Social and Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 191-221.

²⁴ On Evola's relation to the German right see Patricia Chiantera-Stutte, *Julius Evola: Dal dadaismo alla rivoluzione conservatrice, 1919-1940* (Rome: Aracne, 2001); Marco Revelli, *La cultura della destra radicale* (Milan: Angeli, 1985); and the pathbreaking study by Furio Jesi, *Cultura di destra* (Milan: Garzanti, 1979), 77-102; cf. Lutzhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland*, 272-75. Evola's ample publications in German 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, "Judentum und Freimaurerei in Italien" *Völkischer Wille* August 10, 1940; Evola, "Das England von heute - von Juden geformt" *Die Aktion* January 1941, 171-73; Evola, "Arisch-römische Entscheidung" *Wir und die Welt* September 1941, 353-57; Evola, *Grundrisse der faschistischen Rassenlehre* (Berlin: Runge, 1943).

²⁵ Julius Evola, "Razzismo totalitario" *Rassegna Italiana* December 1938, 847-53.

²⁶ For a fine analysis see Francesco Cassata, "'Guerra all'ebreo': La strategia razzista di Giovanni Preziosi e Julius Evola (1937-1943)" in Michele Sarfatti, ed., *La Repubblica sociale italiana a Desenzano: Giovanni Preziosi e l'Ispettorato generale per la razza* (Florence: Giuntina, 2008), 45-75.

between mid-1941 and mid-1942, esoteric racism was more or less the predominant doctrine of Fascist racial policy. Mussolini read Evola's *Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race* in August 1941 with considerable enthusiasm, and adopted its argument as the semi-official line of the regime. In September 1941 Mussolini authorized Evola to establish a bilingual German-Italian journal on race, to be titled *Sangue e Spirito*, "Blood and Spirit." On the German side Evola secured the support of Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss, Alfred Baeumler, and Walter Gross for the project, and proposed Scaligero and Del Massa as collaborators on the Italian side. Plans for the journal centered on elaborations of the Aryan myth; extensive attention to the racial soul and the spirit of the race; an expansive conception of the Jewish threat and a concomitantly expansive conception of antisemitism in order to combat it; demands for both a biological and a spiritual dimension to racial policy; and the cultivation of a racial elite. The project was terminated in March 1942, however, due to opposition from Evola's adversaries in both Italy and Germany. Italian racists unhappy with the esoteric orientation complained to Mussolini that "occultists" were discrediting the racial cause.²⁷

While the ascendancy of the esoteric racist camp within Fascist ranks may have been relatively brief, it indicates that spiritual forms of racism were not only serious contenders for leadership of the fractious racist intelligentsia in Italy, but capable of forming substantial connections with Nazi race officials as well. This requires some revision of previously accepted interpretations of the subject. As one representative analyst has written: "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."²⁸ In reality,

²⁷ Raspanti, "Le correnti del razzismo fascista," 243; Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, 173.

²⁸ Sznajder, "The Fascist Regime, Antisemitism and the Racial Laws in Italy," 29.

such mythological ingredients constituted an integral, if controversial, part of Fascist racism. The esoteric strands within Italian racial doctrine were not confined to peripheral status, and extended well beyond the comparatively well-known figure of Evola. Aside from Evola and Preziosi, the occultist current of racial thought included Roberto Pavese, Piero Pellicano, and Alberto Luchini, who was named head of the Race Office in the Ministry of Popular Culture in May 1941.²⁹ The other main proponents of the esoteric racist tendency were Del Massa, Martinoli, and Scaligero. Del Massa had worked with Evola since the mid-1920s, and eventually occupied a central position in overseeing antisemitic propaganda. But it was Scaligero who came to be seen as Evola's foremost epigone and one of the most prolific racist authors in his own right.³⁰

Scaligero has been characterized as Evola's "faithful popularizer," rendering the aloof theorist's ideas into accessible vernacular terms.³¹ While this description is justified to a significant extent, closer examination of Scaligero's writings can reveal important details about the contours of esoteric racist thought, some of which derive from sources other than Evola. Scaligero's voluminous output alone, amounting to nearly a hundred publications on racial themes, warrants sustained attention to his work. As a student of Steiner's 'spiritual science,' Scaligero's racist texts invoked a number of anthroposophical motifs, albeit usually without explicit attribution.³² The

²⁹ For examples of their work 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; Piero Pellicano, *Ecco il diavolo: Israele!* (Milan: Baldono & Castoldi, 1938); Alberto Luchini, "Razza e Antirazza" *Gerarchia* May 1940, 201-04; 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.

³⁰ For an extended defense of Scaligero's racial works see Rossi, *Esoterismo e razzismo spirituale*, 118-27.

³¹ Maiocchi, *Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista*, 278.

³² As noted in the previous chapter, Scaligero's published works on racial themes employed recognizably anthroposophical vocabulary as early as 1938. While his racial writings refer repeatedly to a wide range of theosophical-anthroposophical tropes which may have been adopted via Evola, there are also instances that appear to stem from Steiner's work, such as the Archangel Michael battling

flood of such works from his pen, beginning in 1938, grew to encompass a wide array of Fascist periodicals by the early 1940s.³³ Often recycling ideas, sentences, and at times whole paragraphs in different essays, Scaligero's work is a paradigmatic example of what historian Roberto Maiocchi has called the "obsessive repetitiveness" of Fascist racial publications.³⁴ Scaligero mixed esoteric tropes with current political considerations and evinced a special fervor for severe state measures regarding race. In one 1941 pamphlet, for example, he boasted of the civilizing effects of the Italian racial laws and effusively endorsed Nazi Germany's "decisive racist campaign."³⁵

Much of Scaligero's racial ideal revolved around a cult of *Romanità* or Romanness, centered on mythic images of Rome's ancient glory. Such visions were

Lucifer and Ahriman. The earliest direct reference to Steiner that I have identified appears in Scaligero's 1941 article "Razzismo spirituale e razzismo biologico," examined below.

³³ In addition to the articles analyzed here, Scaligero's racial texts include the following: Massimo Scaligero, "La razza e lo spirito della lingua" *Regime Fascista* August 20, 1938, 2; Scaligero, "Diversi destini della razza" *Il Resto del Carlino* September 4, 1938; Scaligero, "Motivi originari della razza di Roma" *Regime Fascista* October 22, 1938, 3; Scaligero, "Il mito giudaico del sangue" *Il Resto del Carlino* October 25, 1938; Scaligero, "Razze meridionali e razze nordiche" *Regime Fascista* November 4, 1938, 3; Scaligero, "Per una storia della razza" *Il Resto del Carlino* November 15, 1938; Scaligero, "Il mistero della razza atlantica" *Regime Fascista* November 20, 1938, 3; Scaligero, "Tradizioni della razza del sole" *Regime Fascista* November 27, 1938, 3; Scaligero, "La razza italiana dopo il Primo Impero di Roma" *Regime Fascista* December 4, 1938, 3; Scaligero, "Il segreto di potenza della razza" *Il Resto del Carlino* December 29, 1938; Scaligero, "Psiche e razza" *Critico medico-sociale* January 1939; Scaligero, "Civiltà moderna e razza" *Regime Fascista* July 18, 1939, 3; Scaligero, "Spirito e corpo della razza" *Regime Fascista* November 15, 1939, 3; Scaligero, "Nuova civiltà mediterranea" *Augustea* July 1941, 13-14; Scaligero, "Dalla razza di Roma alla razza italiana" *Il Tevere* September 18, 1941; Scaligero, "Portati dell'idea di razza del Fascismo e del Nazionalsocialismo" *L'Ora* November 1, 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, 3; Scaligero, "Precisazioni sulla teorica razzista" *Il Fascio* March 14, 1942; Scaligero, "Aspetti deleteri di un falso spiritualismo" *La Vita Italiana* April 1942, 364-69; 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; 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.

³⁴ Maiocchi, *Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista*, 265. For references to Scaligero see 266, 278, 282, 286, 305. On Preziosi's esteem for Scaligero as a chief contributor to promoting antisemitism see Canosa, *A caccia di ebrei*, 271.

³⁵ Massimo Scaligero, *L'India contro l'Inghilterra* (Bologna: Il Resto del Carlino, 1941), 49. The pamphlet is an anti-British diatribe, claiming that Jewish influence over British policy threatens "the heroic principles of the authentic Aryan tradition" in both India and Europe, and encouraging Indian nationalists to side with the Axis. According to Scaligero, the Fascists and the Nazis "recognize that the true source of evil in the modern world lies in the tyranny of demo-plutocracy." (61)

widespread in Fascist quarters.³⁶ What Scaligero admired about the racially robust denizens of Imperial Rome were their soldierly qualities, their success at conquering the Mediterranean basin and much of ancient Europe, and the sublime “solar tradition” he believed they embodied.³⁷ These notions were developed at length in Scaligero’s early magnum opus, a 275 page book from 1939 titled *The Race of Rome*.³⁸ The book’s opening sentence refers to “our racist stance” and sets out to strengthen and deepen this Italian racism. Decrying “the amorphous materialism of the democratic societies,” Scaligero declares that the Italians are “a race destined for victory,” with the Fascist regime enshrining “racism in the true and superior sense.”³⁹ Concerned to demonstrate that the Italian race is not just Mediterranean but Nordic and Aryan, Scaligero presents an elaborate narrative modeled in part 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 the West and “the great Mediterranean civilizations” in pre-historic times.⁴⁰ Arguing that Nordic and Mediterranean racial groups came together in the race of Rome thousands of years ago, he portrays “the Italic-Nordic race” as synthesizing the best traits of both groups and thus making possible the unity of Indo-European and Mediterranean racial

³⁶ Cf. 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; Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra* (Rome: Laterza, 2007); Jan Nelis, “Constructing Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of Romanità” *Classical World* 100 (2007), 391-415.

³⁷ For a more detailed description see Massimo Scaligero, *La tradizione solare* (Rome: Teseo, 1971).

³⁸ Massimo Scaligero, *La Razza di Roma* (Tivoli: Mantero, 1939). The work appears to have been composed in 1938; Scaligero referred to the book in the newspaper *Regime Fascista* in December 1938. Evola adopted the phrase himself; cf. Julius Evola, “La razza di Roma” *Regime Fascista* July 12, 1939, 3. On the notion of a “race of Rome” see Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, 103-4.

³⁹ Scaligero, *La Razza di Roma*, 9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 12. For background on the Aryan myth in Italy see Mauro Raspanti, “Il mito ariano nella cultura italiana fra otto e novecento” in Burgio, ed., *Nel nome della razza*, 75-85, and De Donno, ““La Razza Ario-Mediterranea””.

streams, “these two dominating races.”⁴¹ The ancient race of Rome represented the confluence and harmonization of two great racial legacies, giving rise to Western civilization and uniting Mediterranean and Nordic peoples in a grand, noble empire. Thus the various European peoples recovered their primordial Aryan unity under the guidance of Imperial Rome.

At the core of this Roman race, Scaligero explained, is “a superior ethnic element” which has carried aloft for millennia the great racial heritage of ancient Imperial glory and protected it against racial mixture with inferior elements. Thanks to these efforts, “the racial composition of Italy today is the same as it was thousands of years ago,” and both its special spirituality and its special blood have been preserved intact and still form “an organic unity.” Suffused with the spirit of Rome, the Italian people today constitutes “a homogenous racial whole.”⁴² If Fascism can re-establish authentic values that are “anti-modern, anti-egalitarian, aristocratic,” then it will achieve “the re-birth of a superior race that is Roman once more.”⁴³ This version of racial history underwrote Scaligero’s insistence on the universality of Fascist racial and spiritual renewal, a theme central to the rest of his work.⁴⁴ Proclaiming that the Fascist revolution will bring about “a resurrection of the spiritual values of race,” Scaligero looked forward to “the diffusion of a Fascist spirituality throughout the world.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Scaligero, *La Razza di Roma*, 47-49. In the book’s conclusion, Scaligero goes so far as to say that “the Roman, Aryan race constitutes the central core” of “the white race” (268).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 122-23. According to Scaligero, a special minority of spiritually and ethnically advanced members of the race are its proper leaders and the custodians of its spiritual patrimony. (132)

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 170. Scaligero inveighs against “the tyranny of rationalism,” materialism, abstract intellectualism, etc. (171)

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 99: “Racism of a superior character can only be the result of a spirituality universal in essence.” Extolling the “pure spiritual virility of race” (256), Scaligero emphasizes that the Fascist rejuvenation of race is necessary not just for Italy but for the whole world (243).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 173, 195. The book also contains references to Thule, the Grail, Avalon, the Edda, the Popol Vuh, ancient India, ancient Persia, ancient Egypt, Greek mythology, Uranian and Telluric races, and so forth.

In a crucial chapter titled “Anti-Judaism as anti-materialism,” Scaligero denounced “apologists for Jewry” and claimed that the Jews represent “sub-human Ahrimanic forces.” He delineated “our anti-Jewish stance” by explaining that the Roman way of dealing with “the enemy” is to “eliminate that which can do us harm.”⁴⁶ This standpoint informs the rest of the text; near the end of the book Scaligero affirmed that a spiritual conception of race is necessary to an incisive and vital racist policy because it is entirely possible for a “non-Roman, non-Aryan, non-Italian” soul to be disguised within a body that has Italian somatic characteristics.⁴⁷ For this reason, “the Italian racist stance” aims to “surpass the ‘materialistic’ aspects of race.” Materialist approaches to race cannot account for what is most important to racial dignity, namely the racial spirit. “The spirit of the race cannot be the object of scientific analysis, of cold logical vivisection and mere chronology.”⁴⁸ These premises are explored in Scaligero’s other racial works.

A December 1938 article on “Race and the spirituality of Rome” in Farinacci’s newspaper *Regime Fascista*, for example, describes “the blood of the race” as a “vehicle for the transmission of a perennial mission of the spirit.” Rejecting scientific accounts of race, Scaligero argues that Italians must regain contact with the supersensible and supernatural forces of race in order to re-establish racial-spiritual superiority.⁴⁹ A 1939 essay in Preziosi’s journal *La Vita Italiana* extols the “essential principles of our racism,” emphasizing both “the spirituality of race” and “the profound and determinative reality of race.”⁵⁰ The article concludes with a call to “re-

⁴⁶ Ibid., 214, 209, 203.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 259.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 134, 130.

⁴⁹ Massimo Scaligero, “Razza e spiritualità di Roma” *Regime Fascista* December 15, 1938, 3.

⁵⁰ Massimo Scaligero, “La razza e lo spirito della Rivoluzione” *La Vita Italiana* May 1939, 601-05; quotes on 602. Scaligero describes Fascism as a rebellion against “the old rationalistic world,” “the mechanistic mentality,” “the democratic ideal,” and the “abstract intellectual character” of “modern materialistic civilization.” (604)

awaken the power of the superior spiritual principles befitting a superior race.”⁵¹ In Scaligero’s view, “changes on the spiritual plane foretell, recapitulate, or stand for analogous changes in physical life.”⁵² A 1940 essay in the same journal asserts that Fascism’s “new spirituality” offers liberation from modern decadence through “the racist ethic.”⁵³

In a 1941 essay in Preziosi’s journal, Scaligero excoriated those who are skeptical of the racial campaign and “negate the legitimacy of the race problem.” Since “this type of anti-racism” lacks “a true intellectual grasp” of “the spiritual power of race,” it cannot comprehend the integral connection between “biological evolution” and “the evolution of the spirit.”⁵⁴ Scaligero denounced opponents of racism as “pseudo-universalists” who refuse to acknowledge “the authentic essence of racism.”⁵⁵ Though anti-racists do not realize it, “the superior Aryan race” is “the avant-garde of a great marching army” and the racial group which “expresses in itself the potential of evolution.”⁵⁶ The spiritual forces of the Aryan race render it fit to “direct the vital physical energies of humankind.” This demonstrates the universal significance of racism: “Therefore only racist action, in its harmonic ascent, can express transcendent universality.”⁵⁷

⁵¹ Ibid., 605.

⁵² Massimo Scaligero, “Declino spirituale inglese” *La Vita Italiana* May 1940, 533-36, quote on 534.

⁵³ Massimo Scaligero, “Fine di una civiltà e nascita di una razza” *La Vita Italiana* January 1940, 32-39.

⁵⁴ Massimo Scaligero, “Limiti alla comprensione del problema razzista” *La Vita Italiana* September 1941, 255-63; quotes on 255.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 263. Scaligero identifies the “soul of the race” with “the living spiritual values of the Fatherland” and declares that “the genius of the race lives and works” on the “supersensible plane.” (261)

⁵⁶ Ibid., 256. Having repudiated the false and abstract universalism which leads to anti-racism, Scaligero explains that a proper synthesis of the spiritual and the biological can “overcome the dualism of spirit and matter that characterizes Jewish culture.” (261)

⁵⁷ Ibid., 257, 262. Such themes were part of Scaligero’s racial works from the beginning: “A intendere subito il senso del nostro razzismo, basta considerare che se la forza della realtà rivoluzionaria tende ad un tipo differenziato ed unitario di verità di morale e di spiritualità, essa è tale che ritrova le sue radici profonde nelle forze più segrete e più pure della nostra costituzione psico-fisica. In questo senso, aver posto di contro alle creazioni materialistiche e amorfe delle società democratiche, l’ideale di una virtù e di una interna nobiltà, che non si improvvisano, ma che occorre saper risvegliare, risuscitando innanzi tutto l’essenza stessa di una stirpe destinata a vincere il tempo: ciò in effetto è stato sino ad oggi, nel

Taking up a central point of contention between esoteric racists and their detractors, Scaligero's publications consistently highlight the compatibility of Nordic and Mediterranean racial types. A November 1938 article on "European-Mediterranean racial unity" maintains that ancient Roman civilization was "of Nordic origin" and states flatly: "There is no reason for any contrast between the Nordic conception and the Mediterranean conception."⁵⁸ A September 1941 essay points to the alliance between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany as an Aryan synthesis of the Nordic and Mediterranean streams, resolved in the "new unity of the Roman and Germanic spiritual and political-military forces." The "race of Rome," in unity with its Germanic brethren, will become "a race destined to win every battle."⁵⁹ An essay earlier that year celebrated the Fascist-Nazi alliance, "under the sign of the fasces and the swastika," as the achievement of "a new race of the spirit."⁶⁰ The military victories of the Axis powers "carry the values of a universal spirituality destined to remake the world," and the triumph of totalitarianism over democracy heralds "the establishment of a new spiritual order for the entire earth."⁶¹ By March 1942 Scaligero 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 and "restore to mankind the vision of the sacred and eternal."⁶²

regime littorio, razzismo in senso reale e superiore." (Massimo Scaligero, "I problemi della razza e la tradizione di Roma" *Il Resto del Carlino* July 28, 1938)

⁵⁸ Massimo Scaligero, "Unità razziale europeo-mediterranea" *Regime Fascista* November 12, 1938, 3.

⁵⁹ Massimo Scaligero, "Motivi originari e perenni del razzismo romano" *Augustea* September 1, 1941, 15-18. A subsequent article celebrates the swastika as an Aryan symbol: Scaligero, "Un simbolo perenne della razza solare: la croce uncinata" *Augustea* October 1, 1941, 8-9.

⁶⁰ Massimo Scaligero, "Funzione occidentale della nuova civiltà romano-germanica" *La Vita Italiana* February 1941, 152-57; quotes on 152 and 153. Much of the same material initially appeared in Scaligero, "Il volto romano-germanico della nuova storia" *Il Resto del Carlino* June 24, 1940.

⁶¹ Scaligero, "Funzione occidentale della nuova civiltà romano-germanica," 154.

⁶² Massimo Scaligero, "Missione dello spirito nell'ordine nuovo" *Augustea* March 16, 1942, 176-77.

Scaligero portrayed “the Aryan-Mediterranean race” and “the Aryan-Nordic race” as brothers facing a common enemy, “the Semitic race.”⁶³ He described “the Semitic peoples” as “nomads” who are “not bound by any sacred tradition to the soil” and spread racial impurity.⁶⁴ His articles rail against “Semitic contamination” and condemn the “Jewish race” for obscuring and falsifying spirituality.⁶⁵ For Scaligero, Jews were “the race opposed to the spirit.”⁶⁶ Denouncing “the spiritual decadence of Judaism” again and again, he held the Jews responsible for spreading “Ahrimanic, sub-human, sensual and materialistic” forces throughout the world.⁶⁷ The “Mediterranean race,” he insisted, has nothing in common with the “Negroid and Semitic races” and represents “the authentic legacy of the original white race,” but this “superior race” is threatened by “Semitic pollution.”⁶⁸

A major text from the midst of the war titled “Judaism against Rome” draws these themes together, with Scaligero warning against the nefarious machinations of the Elders of Zion, who are bravely resisted by a “united Aryan front” of Fascism and

⁶³ Massimo Scaligero, “La razza, la terra e il fuoco” *La Vita Italiana* December 1941, 626-30, quotes on 626. He continues: “The power of race, the cult of the soil, the agrarian tradition, and the sense of the fatherland are thus developing apace. And in this regard it is significant that in Italy today the dignity of the race is re-awakening at the same time as the cult of the fatherland, the cult of the heroes who have restored the sacred soil of the fatherland, at the same time as the return of the agrarian tradition, the heritage of the ancient and superior Aryan-Mediterranean race. This is not poetry or rhetoric, but a positive communion of the spirit with universal principles that are realizing themselves through action, form and reality, through palpable and visible elements: the race and the soil.” (628)

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 630: the Semites “invaded Egypt in prehistoric times and profoundly polluted its race and civilization, which until that time had borne superior characteristics of solar sacredness that originated in Atlantis.” Hence “the decadence of Egypt” was due to “the unfortunate invasion” of these corrosive Semitic elements, “the direct ancestors of the Jews,” who “demolished and semitized the culture and the people.”

⁶⁵ 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.

⁶⁶ Massimo Scaligero, “La tradizione di Israele ovvero la razza contro lo spirito” *Il Resto del Carlino* September 8, 1938.

⁶⁷ Massimo Scaligero, “La decadenza spirituale del giudaismo” *Regime Fascista* September 18, 1938, 5. He blamed the “spiritual decadence” of a “large part of the English people” on the “international Jewish plutocracy.” (Scaligero, “Declino spirituale inglese,” 533)

⁶⁸ Massimo Scaligero, “Valori mediterranei della razza” *La Vita Italiana* March 1939, 307-13, quotes on 309. He continues: “Every metaphysical and cultural expression of the Hebrews is the result of usurpation.” The only thing the Jews have to show for themselves is “Semitic barbarism.” (311)

Nazism.⁶⁹ Freemasonry, Bolshevism, England, and the United States are all pawns in “the secret Jewish plan.” Indeed Jewry has been scheming against Roman civilization for centuries, and today this takes the form of “the occult struggle of the Elders of Zion” against Italy and Germany.⁷⁰ The Jews have caused “the worst evils of modern man,” particularly materialism, intellectualism, and internationalism.⁷¹ The world war, Scaligero explains, is the outward manifestation of a great spiritual confrontation, and once Fascism is victorious, it will benefit even the peoples that fought against it, the English and Americans, who thought they were fighting for their own liberty but were in fact merely instruments of the Jewish drive for world domination.

Many of Scaligero’s most substantive racial texts appeared in the pages of the infamous Fascist periodical *The Defense of the Race* between 1938 and 1943.⁷² A lavishly illustrated large-format biweekly, the magazine featured contributions from various factions within the racist camp and carried some of the most graphic expressions of racist and antisemitic sentiment to be found in Fascist Italy.⁷³ In 1941 and 1942 Scaligero was one of its most frequent authors. He had the lead article in

⁶⁹ Massimo Scaligero, “Il giudaismo contro Roma” in Alberto Luchini, ed., *Gli ebrei hanno voluto la guerra* (Rome 1942), 21-28, quote on 22. The book contains additional contributions by Luchini, Preziosi, Evola, and Pellicano, and is based on a series of radio broadcasts from October and November 1941.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 25 and 24.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 22. The text is reminiscent of the work of anthroposophist Karl Heise, examined in chapters 2 and 6 above.

⁷² In addition to the articles examined below, his contributions included 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; Scaligero, “Continuità storica della razza italiana” *La Difesa della Razza* April 20, 1942, 15-16.

⁷³ Extensive background on the periodical is available in Valentina Pisanty, *Educare all’odio: ‘La Difesa della razza’ (1938-1943)* (Rome: Motta, 2004; see in particular the section on “Razzismo esoterico” 40-42); 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; Valentina Pisanty, ed., *La difesa della razza: Antologia 1938-1943* (Milan: Bompiani, 2006); Francesco Cassata, “*La Difesa della razza*”: *Politica, ideologia e immagine del razzismo fascista* (Turin: Einaudi, 2008). Cassata, 76-103, contains an insightful examination of esoteric racism and its competition-cooperation with biological racism.

several issues, and many of his writings were decorated with fasces and swastikas.⁷⁴ These essays posit 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.⁷⁵ The Nordic and Mediterranean peoples, according to Scaligero, are two especially close branches of the original Aryans, bound by “racial affinity.”⁷⁶ Rebuffing the notion that the Mediterranean race is contaminated with African elements, he insists that the “authentic Mediterraneans” have always maintained their racial heritage intact and avoided mixture with the “Negroid races,” the “Semitic races,” and other “inferior types.” Indeed the Mediterranean race has been the primary bulwark against “Asiatic-Semitic contamination,” and by withstanding “Negroid and Semitic admixture” has made the rise of European civilization possible.⁷⁷ It was “the Nordic racial element” within the ancient Italian population, the “Italo-Nordic Aryans,” who rebuffed “the invasion of the Italian peninsula by the Semitic ethnic element” and prevented “the Asiatic and Semitic races” from destroying Europe.⁷⁸

Even before the war began, Scaligero’s articles for *La Difesa della Razza* consistently 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” is “world

⁷⁴ Scaligero’s followers argue that his spiritual perspective was out of step with the predominantly biological orientation of the journal as a whole, and that consequently his contributions to *La Difesa della Razza* declined in the course of 1942. For material in support of this view, including reproductions of correspondence between Scaligero and the journal’s editors, see Andrea Federici, “Massimo Scaligero e la maya politica” *Graal: Rivista di scienza dello Spirito* December 2004, 185-213.

⁷⁵ Massimo Scaligero, “La razza italiana dall’Impero Carolingio al feudalesimo” *La Difesa della Razza* December 5, 1941, 13-15, quote on 13.

⁷⁶ Massimo Scaligero, “Il volto autentico della civiltà mediterranea” *La Difesa della Razza* July 20, 1942, 14-16.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 14, 15. The “racial dignity” of the Mediterraneans is derived from “the original Nordic-Atlantean race.” (16)

⁷⁸ Massimo Scaligero, “Dalla razza di Roma alla razza italiana” *La Difesa della Razza* September 20, 1941, 13-15.

conquest and the consolidation of colonial hegemony.”⁷⁹ The article is accompanied by copious photographs of Nazi military paraphernalia. In July 1941, Scaligero announced that the coming defeat of England would bring to Europe a “racial equilibrium based on hierarchy.”⁸⁰ The victory of Germany and Italy in the war will transform the current racist campaign into “the first phase of a totalitarian Aryan universalism” based on “affinity of blood” and will unite peoples who have preserved their racial heritage. This new “Roman-Germanic world” will create “harmony among peoples” on the basis of “spiritual values” and “a universality of the hierarchical type.” Democracy and egalitarianism have “suffocated the spirit” and must be superseded by “the totalitarian principle of Fascism and National Socialism” so that spiritual rejuvenation can begin.⁸¹

Along with attention to military matters, Scaligero’s articles discuss the proper approach to racial policy. Depicting “the Italian race” as a paragon of “Aryan virtue,” he harshly criticizes other proponents of “spiritual racism” for neglecting to take the concrete physical aspects of race seriously enough.⁸² “Blood is the living symbol of the spirit within the human being,” thus “racial consciousness can only be achieved through conscious communion with the blood.”⁸³ In the lead article for *La Difesa della Razza* in August 1942, Scaligero says that the “essential objective of racist doctrine” must include not only “eugenic and sanitary regulations” but also the promotion of “racist consciousness” so that “people do not merely welcome the results of the racist

⁷⁹ Massimo Scaligero, “Omogeneità e continuità della razza italiana” *La Difesa della Razza* June 5, 1939, 38-40, quote on 40.

⁸⁰ Massimo Scaligero, “Verso un supernazionalismo razziale” *La Difesa della Razza* July 20, 1941, 6-9, quote on 7. See also Scaligero, “Supernazionalismo europeo contro internazionalismo” *Regime Fascista* October 8, 1938, 3.

⁸¹ Scaligero, “Verso un supernazionalismo razziale,” 8, 9.

⁸² Massimo Scaligero, “I caratteri dominanti della nostra razza” *La Difesa della Razza* April 5, 1941, 9-11.

⁸³ Massimo Scaligero, “Sangue e spirito” *La Difesa della Razza* October 20, 1941, 13-15, quote on 15. Scaligero also uses Steiner’s term “science of the spirit” here, and designates racism as a “science” which can transcend both psychology and biology. (13)

campaign passively, but become conscious collaborators in this campaign.”⁸⁴ Genuine racism combines “cosmic” and “biological” elements, and a “totalitarian racist praxis” must integrate the somatic and the spiritual. Citing Nazi race theorists as a model, he endorses racial “selection” in far-reaching terms, a selection which conjoins “the purification of the hereditary protoplasm” with purification of the spirit. “To acquire consciousness of the blood is to live true spirituality and sense the primordial grandeur of one’s own race.” For Scaligero, “authentic spirituality” meant uniting the spiritual and the bodily components of race.⁸⁵

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.”⁸⁶ For Scaligero, Hitler’s demand represented a higher purpose for the racist campaign and indicated just how thoroughgoing the battle against Jewry must be. Nations that attempt to remain neutral in this struggle make it possible for “subversive Jewry and Satanic materialism” to corrode their national fiber, and the antisemitic movement must extend its efforts to all countries in the world in order to effectively counter the worldwide Jewish menace.⁸⁷ Scaligero paints a portrait of an apocalyptic struggle

⁸⁴ Massimo Scaligero, “Coscienza del sangue” *La Difesa della Razza* August 20, 1942, 4-6; the opening paragraph reads: “Se esiste una finalità essenziale della dottrina razzista, questa necessariamente consiste in una prassi etico-scientifica che rettifichi i valori della razza, secondo un modello che non occorre inventare ma che già esiste. Ciò può essere realizzato non soltanto attraverso una serie di norme eugeniche e sanitarie, ma anche destando una sensibilità e una coscienza razzista, così che il popolo non accolga passivamente i risultati di un’azione razzista, ma divenga esso stesso consapevole cooperatore di tale azione.”

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4, 6. “One cannot truly understand what racism is without achieving consciousness of the blood.” (5)

⁸⁶ Massimo Scaligero, “Fronte unico ario” *La Difesa della Razza* February 20, 1941, 21-24, quote on 21. The article is immediately preceded by Evola’s article “Andare avanti sul fronte razzista” (18-20).

⁸⁷ Scaligero, “Fronte unico ario,” 22: “Il movimento anti-ebraico giustamente oggi deve acquisire un’ampiezza supernazionalistica sino a divenire un’intesa di tutti i paesi. Proprio perchè si è mossi da un ideale di universalità che non abolisce ma mantiene e armonizza la differenziazione gerarchica, non si può ammettere l’azione di un gruppo etnico culturale a carattere internazionalistico, quale quello ebraico; tale inammissibilità per i popoli acquista vivente significato soprattutto allorchè alla concezione di una nuova universalità ariana corrisponde il risveglio di quell’elemento etnico-spirituale che inizialmente dette impulso a questo ideale di umanità. Ora, un fronte unico si rende necessario per dare all’universalità dell’ideale ariano uno strumento positivo sul piano dell’azione, in quanto non si tratta di combattere contro una nazione, ma contro una ‘internazionalità’ che è nazione nelle nazioni e si

between the “Aryan spirit” and the “Jewish spirit” and says that Nazism and Fascism have furnished the means for winning this struggle. The highest spiritual aspirations can now be achieved through “the praxis of Fascist racism.” The Jewish danger is often insidious and masked, he warns, and even individuals who have the physical appearance of Aryans can be agents of the Jews. He thus calls for expanding and radicalizing “the struggle against world Jewry.”⁸⁸ Military combat is an essential part of this struggle; Scaligero characterizes the war as a valiant resistance by “the indomitable Roman race” against “the blind powers of Jewish materialism,” which will eventually lead to “a heroic victory over the Jewish system” and the establishment of “a new, harmonic social order.”⁸⁹

As early as September 1939, Scaligero envisioned an explicitly eliminationist ‘solution’ to the ‘Jewish problem,’ stated in starkly biological terms, foreseeing the “liquidation” of antisemitism through “the elimination of the Judaic virus and the biological re-integration of Aryan ethnic values” (*la eliminazione del virus giudaico e la reintegrazione biologica dei valori etnici ariani*). At the same time he cast the struggle against the Jewish peril as merely one episode in a much larger confrontation.⁹⁰ This central statement from his article on “The heroic task of the spirit

presenta non soltanto sotto l’aspetto di razza, ma sotto quello di religione, di cultura, di modo di pensare, di conoscere, di agire.”

⁸⁸ Ibid., 22, 23. Even non-Aryan peoples can participate in this struggle, by embracing “the spiritual values of Aryan universalism” and recognizing the “common Jewish danger” that threatens all nations. Scaligero also says the false dualism between the spiritual and the biological is an invention of “the Jewish race,” and that “the Jewish international” directs world events according to a hidden plan, as revealed by the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 24.

⁹⁰ Massimo Scaligero, “Compito eroico dello spirito nell’azione razzista” *La Vita Italiana* September 1939, 327-33: “In all of this, antisemitism represents only a single chapter; once it has been liquidated through the elimination of the Judaic virus and the biological re-integration of Aryan ethnic values, the campaign will assume much broader proportions in which more subtle forces will be at stake; then we will have achieved the conditions for taking up a decisive battle against the profane, egalitarian, leveling, anti-spiritual powers, against moral promiscuity, against satanic materialism, against the lies and abuses of bourgeois modernity, against the hedonistic and orgiastic modern world.” (327) The article also argues that the “correspondence between ethnic values and spiritual values” demonstrates “the universal validity of the racist idea.” (327)

within the racist campaign” found its way into a number of Scaligero’s other works.⁹¹ Associating democracy, humanitarianism, secularism, progress, intellectualism, socialism, abstract rationalism, soullessness, materialism, deceptiveness, and bestiality with the Jews, he warned that the antisemitic campaign of the Fascist regime has not gone far enough; “the spiritual ideal of race” was still in grave danger from “the occult forces of Judaism.”⁹² He called on his fellow Fascists to take up a ruthless struggle against the Jews as “a profound spiritual responsibility.”⁹³ For Scaligero, even self-proclaimed antisemites were not necessarily reliable allies in combating the Jewish threat, as they could be “unwitting instruments of Jewry” themselves, and he thus urged Fascists to make certain that their antisemitism was genuine and intransigent, not “merely external” but alert to subtle Semitic forces operating in secret.

In a May 1941 article on “The Italian Race and the War” Scaligero continued to preach a version of eliminationist antisemitism, declaring that with the proper spiritual-racial approach, “the Jew can be easily recognized and eliminated.”⁹⁴ When

⁹¹ For example, Scaligero, “Verso un supnazionalismo razziale,” 8, declares: “Within this broad campaign, antisemitism represents only an episode; once it is liquidated with the elimination of the Judaic virus and the biological and psychological re-integration of Aryan ethnic values, the campaign will assume much broader proportions.” Evola used the phrase “il virus ebraico” in Preziosi’s journal in 1937. On the image of “the ‘virus’ of Judaeo-Bolshevism” see Steven Beller, *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5-6.

⁹² Scaligero, “Compito eroico dello spirito nell’azione razzista,” 329, 333.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 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 psychological 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 the 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 the concept of metaphysical knowledge, or sunder the concept of the Empire from the concept of universality. The racist idea must transform itself into the positive reality of the Second Roman Empire.”

⁹⁴ Massimo Scaligero, “La razza italiana e la guerra” *La Difesa della Razza* May 5, 1941, 16-19, quote on 17.

“Jewish characteristics” are present, even only to a “faint degree,” then “we are not dealing with the Italian race.” Hence “spiritual unity” demands that the Italian race be kept free of the “Jewish type.” The war is a struggle against the “ethnic chaos” created by “international Jewry,” and winning the war will help accomplish the goal of the racial campaigns begun in Italy and Germany.⁹⁵

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,” begins by positing “the insufficiency of both an exclusively spiritual racism and an exclusively biological racism.”⁹⁶ The article argues that there is no real opposition between the two types of racism, and the very notion that such an opposition might exist represents for Scaligero an imposition of alien Jewish characteristics on healthy Aryan thinking.⁹⁷ In order to avert the Jewish threat to Aryan universalism, the only true answer is “a solution that aims to eliminate the ancient Jewish error from the world.”⁹⁸ Scaligero then relates his conception of “the ideal Aryan human being” directly to 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

⁹⁵ Ibid., 18, 16.

⁹⁶ Massimo Scaligero, “Razzismo spirituale e razzismo biologico” *La Vita Italiana* July 1941, 36-41.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 36-37: “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 precisely 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 [...] We find on the other hand that 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, it is possible to identify the opposition of the Aryan spirit to the Jewish spirit.”

⁹⁸ Ibid., 37.

principal powers that obstruct evolution and the spiritual development of man and assume symbolic form in the figures of Ahriman and Lucifer. The most complete racist synthesis is therefore provided by the conception of three entities which constitute the human being: spirit, soul, body.⁹⁹

Conjoining Steiner and Evola, Scaligero argues that fulfilling “the racist principle” means integrating biological and spiritual forms of racism into “one essential synthesis” which will yield a “true and complete racism.”¹⁰⁰ He elaborates a range of “precautionary measures,” both biological and spiritual, against the threat of racial “deviance or contamination”:

Science of the spirit, science of the soul and science of the body must come together in order to enable an authentic and complete 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 would be. These measures will thus not be simply of a eugenic, biological, sanitary nature, but also of a psychological and psychotherapeutic nature, and of an ethical and spiritual nature.¹⁰¹

The same uncompromising approach to racial policy marks Scaligero’s May 1942 essay “For a Comprehensive Racism,” which outlines a synthesis of biological and spiritual racism.¹⁰² While condemning distortions of authentic racist thought and

⁹⁹ Ibid., 37. Having established Steiner’s work as central to the correct understanding of racism, Scaligero aligns anthroposophy with Evola’s racial theory, presenting them as compatible in their focus on spirit, soul, and body: “The value of every human activity undoubtedly depends on the differential relationship of these three entities which constitute man; for this reason the treatment of the problem of race under this triple aspect must have a decisive significance, just as we find in the recent work of J. Evola, ‘Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race’.”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 39. Scaligero also invoked Steiner’s work in a racial context in Massimo Scaligero, “L’idea di razza propugnata dal Fascismo e dal Nazionalsocialismo” *Il Popolo di Trieste* November 5, 1941.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 38-39.

¹⁰² Massimo Scaligero, “Per un razzismo integrale” *La Vita Italiana* May 1942, 428-34. The enemies of this integral racism are “the old Jewish dualism” which insists on separating spirit and body, soul and race, and the “covertly materialist” position which is “unable to appreciate the spiritual dignity of race.” (430) This “Judaizing tendency” has “no right to exist” and refuses to “acknowledge a possible synthesis of biology and the science of the spirit.” “This opposition between universal and particular, between spirit and life, is the hallmark of Jewish culture.” (431) Preziosi took up the phrase “integral racism” a few months later; cf. Giovanni Preziosi, “Per la soluzione del problema ebraico” *La Vita Italiana* September 1942, 221-24. See also Felice Graziani, “Razzismo integrale” *La Difesa della Razza* December 5, 1942, 12-13.

decrying the persistence of anti-racist viewpoints masquerading as versions of officially sanctioned racism, Scaligero calls for a united front of various types of racism under the Fascist banner in order to beat back the threat against the racist program as a whole. The proper response to this threat is to forge an “integral racism” which combines the strengths of physical and spiritual approaches. Emphasizing that “spiritual science” is essential to “our racism,” he explains that “without the spirit, man loses contact with the physical race.” Because of the crucial spiritual component of race, eugenics alone is not sufficient for a racial revival, while a renewed racial consciousness is the key to “true spiritual ascent.”¹⁰³ Scaligero’s summation of his racial stance combines a commitment to “spiritual science” and a comprehensive racist program, one that brings together spiritual and biological strands into a complete whole in order to bolster the struggle of Aryan-Roman spirituality against Jewish falsification.¹⁰⁴

Scaligero’s writings had a noticeable impact on Fascist racial discourse, and were cited positively even in works that adopted views at odds with his own.¹⁰⁵ A

¹⁰³ Scaligero, “Per un razzismo integrale,” 432, 433. The article takes other racists to task for failing to appreciate the advantages of a spiritual approach: “Some have been scandalized because there is talk not only of a race of the body and a race of the soul, but of a ‘race of the spirit’ as well. Some have said: the spirit cannot have a race. It is true: the spirit cannot have a race, but there exists and has always existed a ‘race of the spirit.’ No pure spirits have ever been seen in this world; the spiritual can only exist for humanity when it manifests itself via a soul and a body, being born within a given family and a given race.” (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.

¹⁰⁴ Scaligero, “Per un razzismo integrale,” 433: “Consciousness of belonging to one’s own race does not mean merely enduring the circumstances of biological materialism, but being on the path of true spiritual ascent, of the world of nature and of race biologically understood; it means being able to live concretely this law of the spirit within individual experience. In this way the dualism of spirit and matter can be overcome, the dualism that characterized the ancient Telluric-lunar cultures and especially Jewish culture.”

¹⁰⁵ Scaligero’s works are cited frequently in the quarterly ‘Bibliografia sulla Civiltà del Fascismo’ published in the journal *Dottrina Fascista* between 1938 and 1943. For example, the *Bibliografia in Dottrina Fascista* vol. 6 no. 5, May 1942, 382-87, lists nine articles by Scaligero from six different publications, all from February through April 1942, including *Roma Fascista*, *Il Fascio*, *Regime Fascista*, *La Vita Italiana*, *Augustea*, and *La Fiamma*. In 1941 and 1942 *Il Fascio*, a Fascist weekly from Milan, carried a column on page 2 titled “Sottovento,” signed with the pseudonym “Trestelle,” which often promoted spiritual racism in general and Scaligero’s publications in particular.

1940 book on *The Spirit and the Race*, which rejected Aryan and Nordic themes as ill-suited to an Italian racism, reproduced a lengthy antisemitic passage from Scaligero.¹⁰⁶ More remarkable still was Giacomo Acerbo's substantial volume *The Fundamentals of Fascist Racial Doctrine*, a classic expression of 'national racism' rather than spiritual racism or biological racism, and often considered a semi-official rebuke against Aryanist theories and pro-German inclinations. Acerbo had initially opposed the race laws, and his book was subjected to withering attacks by Preziosi and other esoteric racists. Acerbo cited Scaligero's *The Race of Rome* positively.¹⁰⁷

These instances testify to the effect that Scaligero's writings had on Fascist racism in its various forms. It is difficult to determine whether they may have influenced Mussolini's thinking on race, but a tantalizing bit of archival evidence indicates that 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," and sent Mussolini "a new article of mine regarding the race problem."¹⁰⁸

As profuse as his contribution to Fascist racial propaganda was, however, Scaligero did not occupy an official position within the race bureaucracy. This distinction was reserved for Del Massa and Martinoli. The initial institutional framework for their efforts was the network of *Centri per lo studio del problema ebraico*, 'Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem,' established in various Italian

¹⁰⁶ Salvatore De Martino, *Lo Spirito e la Razza* (Rome: Signorelli, 1940), 58-59.

¹⁰⁷ Giacomo Acerbo, *I fondamenti della dottrina fascista della razza* (Rome: Ministero della Cultura Popolare, 1940), 83.

¹⁰⁸ Handwritten note from Scaligero to 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. The article in question may have been Scaligero, "La razza e lo spirito della lingua," published in Farinacci's newspaper *Regime Fascista* on August 20, 1938.

cities in 1941 by Luchini as head of the Race Office, with significant support from Preziosi.¹⁰⁹ Del Massa edited the bulletin of the Centers, titled *Il problema ebraico*, from its founding in April 1942. The Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem served to disseminate the ideas of the esoteric racist current.¹¹⁰ They held the Jews responsible for “spiritual degeneration” and promoted educational and propaganda programs highlighting the Jewish peril.¹¹¹ Del Massa was their chief theorist, and his journal *Il problema ebraico* expressed Fascist racism “in its most extreme form.”¹¹²

His opening essay in the November 1942 issue, under the title “Racism and the New Europe,” is redolent of anthroposophical vocabulary, punctuated by tirades against the Jews and their contagion.¹¹³ Del Massa declared that Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were the instruments of a higher power, fighting the war to fulfill the divine plan.¹¹⁴ In another article in the same issue of *Il problema ebraico*, “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.”¹¹⁵ The Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem did not merely engage in propaganda.

¹⁰⁹ On the *Centri per lo studio del problema ebraico* see Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 126-27; Matard-Bonucci, *L'Italie fasciste et la persécution des juifs*, 384-86; and Centro Furio Jesi, ed., *La menzogna della razza*, 256-58. The constitution of the Milan Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem was published in *Tempo di Mussolini* August 1942, 1261-62.

¹¹⁰ Raspanti, “Le correnti del razzismo fascista,” 244-45.

¹¹¹ See e.g. the file on the Milan *Centro per lo studio del problema ebraico*, ACS SPD/CO b. 1144 f. 509485, which contains a poster advertising its “courses for youth,” April – June 1942; seven courses are offered: 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.

¹¹² Camilla Bencini, “La campagna di stampa” in Collotti, ed., *Razza e fascismo* vol. 2, 11-28, quote on 15; see above all 12-17 on Del Massa and *Il problema ebraico*. It was published monthly, with an estimated total print run of 2000 copies for each issue. Del Massa also authored antisemitic articles in the newspapers *La Nazione* (Florence) and *Il Resto del Carlino* (Bologna), among others.

¹¹³ 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.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18: the Fascist powers are led by “la certezza imperativa di dover dare all'Europa e al mondo un nuovo orientamento, un nuovo sistema di vita; e in tale certezza ci sentiamo gli strumenti per la realizzazione di un piano che trascende l'umano, di un piano elaborato nelle sfere spirituali che hanno scelto noi per attuarlo nel mondo.”

¹¹⁵ Aniceto Del Massa, “Premesse per una concezione spirituale del razzismo” in *ibid.*, 22-23, quote on 22.

They were actively involved in prodding the Italian police authorities to adopt more aggressive actions against the Jewish ‘Trojan horse.’¹¹⁶ As late as June 1943 the Centers monitored Jews who returned to Italy from France to avoid internment in the camps.¹¹⁷ 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.¹¹⁸

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. The Badoglio government ordered the liquidation of the *Centri per lo studio del problema ebraico* on August 1, 1943, and they were shut down a month later.¹¹⁹ With the Allies advancing into southern Italy, German forces occupied central and northern Italy in September 1943 and established the Italian Social Republic or RSI, better known as the Republic of Salò, under the nominal leadership of Mussolini.¹²⁰ Del Massa was a fervent supporter of the hard-line Fascist RSI, and continued to publish works on race under its auspices.¹²¹ In July 1944 he celebrated

¹¹⁶ Moos, *Ausgrenzung, Internierung, Deportation*, 102-03. See also the July 3, 1943 memorandum from the Ministry of Popular Culture ordering its contacts and liaisons in various prefectures to work closely with the *Centri per lo studio del problema ebraico* (AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923-1952) b. 484 f. 318).

¹¹⁷ ACS MI/DGPS Div. Aff. gen. e ris. 1943 b. 22 cat. C1: 85269.

¹¹⁸ Bencini, “La campagna di stampa,” 17.

¹¹⁹ 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).

¹²⁰ Histories of the RSI include Bertoldi, *Salò: Vita e morte della Repubblica Sociale Italiana*; F. W. Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship: Mussolini, Hitler, and the Fall of Italian Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962); Lutz Klinkhammer, *Zwischen Bündnis und Besatzung: Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Republik von Salò 1943-1945* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993); Giorgio Bocca, *La Repubblica di Mussolini* (Milan: Mondadori, 1994); Karl Mittermaier, *Mussolinis Ende: Die Republik von Salò 1943 - 1945* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1995); Luigi Ganapini, *La repubblica delle camicie nere* (Milan: Garzanti, 1999); Aurelio Lepre, *La storia della repubblica di Mussolini* (Milan: Mondadori, 1999).

¹²¹ Del Massa published frequently in the Milan Fascist biweekly *L’Ora* in 1944, issues full of heroic depictions of German troops. Part of his task seems to have been to provide high-culture distraction from a losing war. The back page of the November and December 1944 issues prominently advertise his book *Razzismo Ebraismo*, which was published as part of the *Quaderni de ‘L’Ora’*. On Del Massa

the military forces of the RSI and their German allies, rejecting “enemy propaganda” about “concentration camps” and praising “Nordic-Mediterranean Aryanness.”¹²² Del Massa had written on race before the racial laws were adopted. In 1937 he praised the heroic Nordic peoples and “the white race” as saviors of the West, defending themselves against the aggression of the colored races, and explained that winning this racial struggle would require a racial rejuvenation among white peoples.¹²³ He discussed the “racial struggle,” the threat of “biological deformation,” and the need for strong races to dominate weak races, and declared that Fascist Italy must go beyond “ordinary racism” to a spiritual racism.¹²⁴

In June 1943, just before the fall of Mussolini’s first regime, Del Massa transformed *Il problema ebraico* into a full-fledged periodical meant for a broad readership, but only one issue was published before the suppression of the Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem. After the establishment of the RSI, Del Massa collected his articles for *Il problema ebraico* in book form, published in 1944 under the title *Razzismo Ebraismo*.¹²⁵ His opening essay, “The Jewish Problem and Racial Consciousness,” depicts the “Jewish virus” as the root of evil in the world.¹²⁶ According to Del Massa, the fight against Jewry is a matter of racial “selection,” and Fascism and National Socialism represent “the only effective barrier” against Jewish

as one of the “principal promoters of antisemitic activity” in Florence, see Collotti, ed., *Razza e fascismo* vol. 1, 235, and cf. 252.

¹²² Aniceto del Massa, “Rinascere un esercito” *L’Ora* July 30, 1944, 4-7, quotes on 4 and 6. The article is adorned with swastikas and photographs of Nazi officers and Italian soldiers.

¹²³ Del Massa, *Cronache*, 15-16; the essay is dated 1937.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21 and 26. The same essay denounces democracy, rationalism, and humanitarianism, celebrates Mussolini and Fascism, and looks forward to a synthesis of Italian and German spiritual culture. In November 1938 Del Massa signed an open letter of Futurist artists proclaiming their antisemitic credentials; cf. Cassata, *La Difesa della razza*, 281. See also Aniceto del Massa, “Considerazioni sull’arte e sulla razza” *Regime Fascista* March 22, 1942, 3.

¹²⁵ Aniceto Del Massa, *Razzismo Ebraismo* (Verona: Mondadori, 1944).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11, the opening paragraph of the first essay, “Problema ebraico e coscienza razziale.” The passage is also available as an excerpt in Caffaz, ed., *Discriminazione e persecuzione degli ebrei nell’Italia fascista*, 62-63.

contamination.¹²⁷ Another essay discusses “how to combat and eliminate the Jewish spirit.”¹²⁸ Expounding his esoteric conception of the “Jewish peril,” Del Massa invoked the work of Austrian anthroposophist Ludwig Thieben as a penetrating spiritual analysis of the essence of Jewry.¹²⁹ In Del Massa’s view, “the destiny of the Jewish people” is to “live parasitically amidst the other nations,” striving “first to disintegrate them and then to dominate them.”¹³⁰ The urgency of the “Jewish problem” derives from the insidious nature of the Jewish threat to Italian life:

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.¹³¹

Boasting of the metaphysical dignity of “our racism,” Del Massa asserted that in spite of the Jewish “poison,” the “Aryan race” has thrived when it has resisted miscegenation and consequent degeneration.¹³² But in a world “fallen into Jewish hands” severe measures were required. Del Massa offered a spiritual justification for “hating the enemy”: “In order to advance spiritually it is necessary to hate evil,” which is embodied in “Jewish vileness.”¹³³ This hatred of the Jewish enemy must be completely implacable, he exhorted, and the enemy must be destroyed:

¹²⁷ Del Massa, *Razzismo Ebraismo*, 12. He continues: “Nessuna delle virtù che hanno fatto dei romani e della loro storia una sintesi superiore può sussistere senza coscienza razziale. Il giudeo ha sempre mirato a colpire tale coscienza perchè contro la razza di Roma doveva far prevalere la propria che ne è la perfetta antitesi.”

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 15. This essay, “Che cosa è lo spirito ebraico a come combatterlo,” quotes Paul de Lagarde and Houston Stewart Chamberlain at length.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 25. He characterizes the Jews as the “popolo che domina il mondo con l’oro e che per raggiungere i propri fini egemonici, secondo un piano che si svolge regolarmente, ha scatenato l’attuale guerra.” (31)

¹³² *Ibid.*, 34, 53, 59.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 55, 58. The RSI officially declared all Jews to be members of an “enemy nation” in 1943.

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.¹³⁴

Facing such an enemy, Del Massa insisted that tolerance and leniency were out of the question. The only way to defeat the Jewish foe was through “intransigent intolerance.”¹³⁵ In December 1941 he declared that the “war of the spirit” must “integrate the war of arms” and take up the military cause. At the same time, he considered it crucial to “differentiate ourselves from the enemy in order to vanquish him.”¹³⁶ His words reveal 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.¹³⁷

Del Massa's *Razzismo Ebraismo* appeared in November 1944, when the last-ditch Fascist statelet in northern Italy had only a few more months to exist.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 59. The passage reads in the original: “L’odio per essere efficace deve essere freddo, implacabile, costante, spiritualmente affinatissimo poichè si tratta di distruggere un nemico ultrapotente, agguerrito, nel pieno del suo vigore, incarnante un alto potenziale di brutalità. Si tratta di liberare il mondo, l’organismo umano, da un male feroce che si è diffuso per un lento periodo di programmatica intossicazione; soltanto una volontà nutrita dall’odio può, in questo momento, vincere e vincere alla maniera romana con l’implacabile distruzione dell’avversario, poichè questa volta è in giuoco l’esistenza del popolo romano: Giuda giuoca la sua ultima carta contro Roma.”

¹³⁵ Ibid., 68. As Del Massa explains: “Gli ebrei mirano al dominio del mondo; vi sono testimonianze inconfutabili su ciò. Vogliono dominare il mondo e per questo compiono opera disgregatrice nelle nazioni in cui vivono e dove sono tollerati.” For this reason he resolutely rejects “ogni e qualunque atteggiamento di tolleranza” toward the Jews. (66)

¹³⁶ Ibid., 63, 64, 69. Reprising a theme central to Steiner’s work after WWI, Del Massa also fulminates against Americanism and Bolshevism as the tragic results of democracy, humanitarianism, disrespect for “racial hierarchy,” and an anti-spiritual orientation; see e.g. 61 and 72.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 79-80.

Throughout the period of the RSI, Del Massa played an active role in facilitating political and military cooperation between Italian and German forces, and was particularly instrumental in initiating covert actions of various kinds. He was the director of the “Ufficio Segreto” or ‘secret bureau’ of the Partito Fascista Repubblicano from its inception in 1943, and was one of the two leaders of the clandestine “PDM organization,” an underground network of militant Fascists operating behind Allied lines.¹³⁸ Thus Del Massa remained involved in defending the Fascist regime until the very end. Scaligero, on the other hand, had no official role under the RSI, though he continued to publish in Fascist organs.¹³⁹ He was arrested and imprisoned as a Fascist sympathizer after the Allies entered Rome in June 1944.¹⁴⁰

The continuity in anthroposophical antisemitism before and after 1943 is perhaps best illustrated by the career of Ettore Martinoli, a case study in the confluence of spiritual racist theory and practice under Fascism. Martinoli authored a number of aggressively antisemitic articles in the early 1940s, though his racial

¹³⁸ 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 and 146; Rao, *La fiamma e la celtica*, 16-17; Parlato, *Fascisti senza Mussolini*, 76-79 and 402-10. Del Massa conceived and proposed the “PDM organization” and was its main operative leader; it was named after him and its other chief figure, Puccio Pucci. Del Massa continued to lead clandestine resistance efforts even after the final defeat of the RSI in April 1945.

¹³⁹ On Scaligero’s antisemitic writings in the Bologna Fascist newspaper *Il Resto del Carlino* during the RSI period see Mauro Raspanti, “Il tema del razzismo ne ‘il Resto del Carlino’ (1938-1945)” in Marchetti, ed., *L’applicazione della legislazione antisemita in Emilia Romagna*, 281-82, and Rosella Ropa, *L’Antisemitismo nella Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (Bologna: Patron, 2000), 8; cf. Nazario Sauro Onofri, *Ebrei e fascismo a Bologna* (Bologna: Grafica Lavino, 1989), 100, 118. Raspanti portrays Scaligero as a major contributor to radical antisemitism, reporting that his articles insisted on “an uncompromising battle against Jewry” and “the total Aryanization of the Italian people.” On Scaligero’s continued collaboration with Preziosi’s *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. Scaligero’s article “Segni di una missione nuova del pensiero” from the November 1944 issue of *La Vita Italiana* is reproduced in *Graal: Rivista di scienza dello Spirito* June 2006, 62-68.

¹⁴⁰ Scaligero was imprisoned by the Allies from June to November 1944. According to his autobiographical account, he was arrested because of his frequent visits to the German embassy in Rome, which he claims were part of his unstinting efforts on behalf of the anthroposophical movement; cf. Scaligero, *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce*, 101.

writings sometimes extended beyond this central focus on the Jews.¹⁴¹ In a 1942 essay Martinoli described “the global Jewish conspiracy”:

Jewry does not carry out its Judaic conquests solely because of its innate love of money or its greed for profit or its subtle Hebraic commercial cunning, but in order to fulfill its 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.¹⁴²

This dire Jewish plot demands 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 goals.” Blaming the world war on the Jews, Martinoli praised Mussolini as “the true historical adversary, conscious and deliberate, of the international Jewish conspiracy.”¹⁴³

Writing in Preziosi’s journal in April 1943, Martinoli depicted a life-or-death struggle between Fascism and Jewry, which Fascism must win if it is to create a New Europe. The goal of the “Jewish conspiracy” is “world domination,” while Fascism is fighting “to liberate and purify the world” from the Jewish menace and thus pave the way

¹⁴¹ Martinoli, *Funzione della mistica nella rivoluzione fascista*, 14: “the Fascist revolution not only brought a new political-social order into the world, it also ushered in the beginning of a new civilization, one which the white race, having exhausted its previous historical cycle, necessarily had to take to heart if it did not want to perish.” “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.” (32) The book also denounces the “Jewish-Masonic demo-plutocracy” (19).

¹⁴² Ettore Martinoli, “L’importanza di Trieste per l’ebraismo internazionale” *La Porta Orientale* June 1942, 106-10, quote on 106. The Trieste journal *La Porta Orientale* was an important outlet for radical antisemitism and a gathering point for hard-line racist and pro-Nazi elements within Fascist ranks. For background see Silva Bon, *La persecuzione antiebraica a Trieste 1938-1945* (Udine: Del Bianco, 1972), 144-51. On Martinoli’s position as a leading member of the extremist Fascist faction in the city see 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.

¹⁴³ Martinoli, “L’importanza di Trieste per l’ebraismo internazionale,” 107, 109. For additional context on Martinoli’s antisemitic agitation in Trieste see Bon, *La persecuzione antiebraica a Trieste*, 83, 150, 197-98.

for “a new humankind.”¹⁴⁴ Five years after the passage of the racial laws, Martinoli raged against “the Jewish plutocratic oligarchy” and blamed “the liberal democratic regimes,” the enemies of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, for giving shelter to the sinister Jewish threat.¹⁴⁵ In a section on “Judaism and Freemasonry” he invoked the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and warned that democracy and social equality threaten to turn “the civilization of our race” into “a servant of Israel.” But all is not lost:

If it had not been for the providential arrival of those towering and superhuman 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.¹⁴⁶

The article concluded with a discussion of the “struggle between Fascism and Jewry for the new Europe.” While Fascism held the key to “purification from Jewish servitude,” the strongest defense against Jewish corruption was “racism, which opposes itself to Judaism.”

Racism has by now established itself in the center of the political, cultural, and ethical development of our century. With the achievement of Aryan racial consciousness, to an extent not seen before now, racism is erecting a barrier against Jewish domination, a barrier that is even more spiritual than political. Racism is also beginning to shape a continental European conscience, the only possible basis for an orderly and harmonious convergence of the peoples of Europe toward a unified civilization.¹⁴⁷

Thanks to “divine providence,” the “titanic struggle” of Fascism and Nazism has rescued “the new Europe” from the clutches of international Jewry.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Ettore Martinoli, “Gli impulsi storici della nuova Europa e l’azione dell’ebraismo internazionale” *La Vita Italiana* April 1943, 355-64, quotes on 362 and 364.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 359. “Under the guise of democratic liberty the most despotic domination imaginable has developed, the domination of plutocracy and of Jewry.” (358)

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 360. According to Martinoli, “Jewry and Masonry are behind all of the liberal, democratic, egalitarian, and leveling movements, behind everything that is subverting the traditional European world and dragging both Europe and America into the present chaos.” (361)

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 362, 363.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 364. Martinoli refers to Mussolini and Hitler as the “two men of genius” who have “saved Aryan civilization.”

Martinoli continued his public agitation against the Jewish enemy in other forums as well. In May 1942 he gave a lecture in Milan on “Jewry’s efforts to conquer western civilization.”¹⁴⁹ In June and July 1943 he gave a series of lectures in Trieste on “Judeo-Masonic influence in modern civilization.”¹⁵⁰ As late as November 1944 he was still contributing antisemitic jeremiads to Preziosi’s journal, calling for an intensification of the struggle against Jews, Masons, and hidden enemies of Fascism.¹⁵¹ Beyond publications and lectures, Martinoli’s endeavors found institutional expression above all in his hometown of Trieste, a formerly Habsburg city which in 1938 had the third largest Jewish community in Italy, over 6000 people. 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” to be “an irreconcilable enemy of Fascism.”¹⁵² Already in mid-1942 Trieste witnessed violent antisemitic outbursts.¹⁵³ The city represented a microcosm of the real-world effects of official Fascist racism.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ ACS SPD/CO b. 1144 f. 509485 includes a report on Martinoli’s May 1942 lecture at Milan GUF headquarters titled “L’ebraismo alla conquista della civiltà occidentale.”

¹⁵⁰ Silva Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste 1930-1945: Identità, persecuzione, risposte* (Udine: Goriziana, 2000), 263; cf. 148.

¹⁵¹ See 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.

¹⁵² 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 *La Stampa*, one of the principal daily national newspapers in Italy, published in Turin, far from Trieste. The text of Mussolini’s September 18, 1938 “Discorso di Trieste” can be found in Cavaglian and Romagnani, *Le interdizioni del Duce*, 83-87.

¹⁵³ See the detailed 1942 reports describing “grave acts of violence” perpetrated against Jewish institutions in Trieste, including attacks on both property and persons, in ACS MI/DGPS Div. Aff. gen. e ris. 1943 b. 22 cat. C1: 85342-85347.

¹⁵⁴ For background see the pioneering work by historian Silva Bon, *La persecuzione antiebraica a Trieste*, and the thoroughly revised and expanded edition, Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste 1930-1945*, as well as Maura Hametz, “The Ambivalence of Italian Antisemitism: Fascism, Nationalism, and Racism in Trieste” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 16 (2002), 376-401; for a vivid account of the everyday persecution of Jews in Trieste under the race laws see Gemma Volli, “Trieste 1938-1945” in Guido

In addition to his duties as Secretary of the Italian Anthroposophical Society, based in Trieste, Martinoli was the founder and director of the Trieste Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem, established in early 1942.¹⁵⁵ Of all the Centers, the one in Trieste worked most closely with Preziosi, and Martinoli developed an especially close relationship with the German consulate in Trieste as well.¹⁵⁶ He belonged to the hard-line faction of Trieste Fascists who were considered a ‘fifth column’ for the Nazis prior to 1943. The surviving records of his Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem provide an illuminating example of esoteric antisemitism in action.¹⁵⁷ The stated purpose of the Trieste Center was to pursue both propaganda activities and practical cooperation with local authorities.¹⁵⁸ Along with Preziosi’s enthusiastic support, Martinoli had the backing of Luchini as head of the Race Office in the Ministry of Popular Culture, of the local Fascist party apparatus, and of the Prefect of

Valabrega, ed., *Gli Ebrei in Italia durante il fascismo* vol. 3 (Milan: Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea, 1963), 38-50. 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. In an April 13, 1943 letter to Mussolini, Preziosi described Martinoli as “the single most hated man in plutocratic-Jewish-Masonic circles in Trieste.” (Parente, Gentile, and Grillo, eds., *Giovanni Preziosi e la questione della razza in Italia*, 264)

¹⁵⁵ Secondary sources generally date the founding of the Trieste Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem to June 1942, when it was officially incorporated, but the archival documents concerning the Center in the Archivio di Stato di Trieste begin in February 1942. According to one source, citing a series of detailed reports sent to Mussolini by a Trieste Fascist in early 1944, Martinoli actually founded the Center in 1939 under the name *Centro Antiebraico di Trieste*; see Mattiussi, “Il PNF a Trieste 1938-1943,” 17-20. I have been unable to verify this claim.

¹⁵⁶ Martinoli and the Trieste Center are discussed extensively in Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 255-64, 294-302; Giuseppe Mayda, *Ebrei sotto Salò: La persecuzione antisemita 1943-1945* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978), 45-50; and Carlo Ventura, “Il centro fascista di Trieste per lo studio del problema ebraico” *Trieste: Rivista politica* 8 (1961), 20-23. De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 588, reports that the Trieste Center was “particularly active and in constant contact with Preziosi.” See also Pichetto, *Alle radici dell’odio*, 95; Canosa, *A caccia di ebrei*, 270; and Lutz Klinkhammer, *Stragi naziste in Italia: La guerra contro i civili (1943-44)* (Rome: Donzelli, 1997), 67.

¹⁵⁷ The richest 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 these records. Further material may be difficult to trace; at his post-war trial, Martinoli stated that he burned the Center’s archive in 1945.

¹⁵⁸ See Minister of Popular Culture to Prefect of Trieste, February 5, 1942, announcing establishment of a Centro per lo studio del problema ebraico in Trieste, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923-1952) b. 484 f. 318.

Trieste, Tullio Tamburini. Luchini's February 1942 letter to Tamburini 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, of philosemitism," and was thus in special need of renewed efforts toward a correct "comprehension of the Jewish question."¹⁵⁹

In the eyes of 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 local officials.¹⁶⁰

Martinoli quickly made the most of these parameters, placing central emphasis on the public dissemination of propaganda while simultaneously initiating a series of contacts with municipal authorities in order to pursue more concrete projects. The Trieste Center's "study and propaganda" efforts were able to build on local traditions of conspiratorial antisemitism corresponding to Martinoli's own views.¹⁶¹ These propaganda activities earned Martinoli praise for his "dynamism" and for making the Center "an even more effective organ in the struggle against Jewry and its subsidiaries."¹⁶² Its most ominous achievement, however, did not lie in the realm of propaganda.

In early August 1942, Martinoli obtained initial permission from the city government for the Center to conduct research in local record-keeping agencies in order to identify Jewish residents of Trieste.¹⁶³ Above all, the Center was given access

¹⁵⁹ Alberto Luchini, Capo dell'Ufficio Studi e Propaganda sulla Razza, Ministry of Popular Culture, to Tamburini, Prefect of Trieste, February 25, 1942, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923-1952) b. 484 f. 318.

¹⁶⁰ Alessandro Pavolini, Minister of Popular Culture, to Tamburini, May 29, 1942 and June 2, 1942, in *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ See e.g. the anonymous submissions from early 1938 denouncing "occult forces" and the prevalence of "Jewish power" and "Masonic Jewry" in the city: AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923-1952) b. 363: 219-223.

¹⁶² 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.

¹⁶³ Commune 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; and Ministry of the Interior,

to the municipal registry office, with its complete holdings on births, marriages, and residency. Between August 1942 and July 1943 the Center compiled a list of Jews in Trieste on this basis, evidently including addresses.¹⁶⁴ Martinoli reportedly focused much of his attention on people of mixed heritage, with partial Jewish background, especially if they had been Fascists or active in the militia before the imposition of the race laws.¹⁶⁵ The Center's efforts impressed the German consul, who submitted an extremely positive report to the foreign ministry in Berlin in November 1942, highlighting the Center's access to the municipal statistical office and pointing out the usefulness of its work identifying and assembling records of Jews and those of mixed ancestry.¹⁶⁶ The report mentioned Martinoli's anthroposophist inclinations and claimed that information from the Trieste Center influenced Mussolini to order intensified surveillance of Jews across Italy.

The data collected by the Trieste 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.¹⁶⁷ Although the *Centri per lo studio del problema ebraico* were suppressed

General Directorate for Demography and Race, to Prefect of Trieste, September 24, 1942, authorizing the Center to access the municipal registry office; AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923-1952) b. 484 f. 318.

¹⁶⁴ See Martinoli's monthly requests to Tamburini for extension of access to the municipal registry office in *ibid.*; the final one in the file is dated July 3, 1943. Martinoli's experience as a local Fascist official seems to have provided a crucial opportunity in this instance; he had previously served as president of the supervisory board of the Trieste municipal registry office. See his August 7, 1931 application to the Interior Ministry on behalf of the Anthroposophical Society of Italy, where Martinoli describes himself as "Presidente del Consiglio di sorveglianza dell'Ufficio Statistico-anagrafico di Trieste" (ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317).

¹⁶⁵ Mattiussi, "Il PNF a Trieste 1938-1943"; Mattiussi's source depicts Martinoli as the driving force behind the radical antisemites within the party in Trieste from 1938 onward.

¹⁶⁶ The November 23, 1942 report, marked 'secret,' from the German Consul General in Trieste, von Druffel, to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin, sent via the German ambassador in Rome, is discussed and excerpted at length in Ventura, "Il centro fascista di Trieste per lo studio del problema ebraico," and Mayda, *Ebrei sotto Salò*, 45-46.

¹⁶⁷ 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; Michael Wedekind,

by the Badoglio regime, Martinoli used the Badoglio interlude to prepare the Trieste Center for German intervention and the establishment of the RSI.¹⁶⁸ With the German occupation, the city became a center of Nazi efforts to extend the Final Solution to Italy; the SS contingent overseeing operations in Trieste was headed by Odilo Globocnik. One of the most infamous concentration camps in Italy, the Risiera di San Sabba, was located in Trieste. Mass arrests and round-ups of Trieste's Jews began just after it was effectively annexed to the Reich in October 1943, and the city was declared *judenrein* or free of Jews in January 1944. In the space of three months, one of Italy's largest Jewish communities was eliminated.

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 archival evidence, but several historians have reached the plausible conclusion that the extensive research carried out by the Center, and the lists it compiled of Trieste's Jewish population, served a crucial function in executing the German plans.¹⁶⁹ Martinoli worked closely

Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien 1943 bis 1945 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003); 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). Fascist cooperation with the Nazis in Trieste was also conditioned by ethnic tensions between Italian and Slavic communities; cf. Maura Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian, 1918-1954* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 124-34.

¹⁶⁸ Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 385-86. The September 3, 1943 letter from the Ufficio stralcio del soppresso Ufficio 'Studi e Propaganda sulla Razza' in AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923-1952) b. 484 f. 318, announcing that the Trieste Centro has been abolished, asks that all of its records and holdings be delivered to the liquidation office in Rome, but there is no reply in the file. The next document is from the RSI. In a February 9, 1944 letter to the Trieste Prefecture in the same file, Martinoli affirmed that "the Center remained continuously functional throughout the Badoglio period."

¹⁶⁹ Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 358-59, reasons that since the lists of Jews to be detained and deported were available immediately after the Germans occupied the city, the Trieste Center must have provided them directly to the German forces. Wedekind concludes that Martinoli's efforts paved the way for Globocnik's efficient round-up of Trieste's Jews. Mayda, *Ebrei sotto Salò*, 46-47, corroborates this argument. Bon, *Gli Ebrei a Trieste*, 258, is more circumspect, noting that solid documentation has not been located and that Martinoli denied the charge after the war; her investigation nonetheless tends to support Wedekind's and Mayda's analysis. Bon concludes: "This aspect of the Trieste Center's activities is the most precise and concrete link uniting Fascist antisemitic persecution with its Nazi counterpart" (259). On the Germans' extremely close ties to the Trieste Center, see Wedekind, 359-61, and Bon, 257-62 and 294-95; Wedekind equally emphasizes the Center's own "ideological proximity to National Socialism" (358).

with the SS from September 1943 onward, and a local SS officer commended Martinoli for this assistance in the “struggle against Jewry and Freemasonry.”¹⁷⁰ Scholarly assessments of the Trieste Center underscore its collusion with the machinery of the holocaust. Annamaria Vinci describes the Trieste Center, even before September 1943, as a “veritable stronghold of the future Nazi antisemitic persecution.”¹⁷¹ According to Maura Hametz, Martinoli’s Center “provided an institutional base for the promotion of the Nazi program.”¹⁷² In Giuseppe Mayda’s 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.”¹⁷³ Silva Bon characterizes Martinoli as a supporter of “the German model of solving the Jewish question.”¹⁷⁴ These judgements, borne out by the historical record, reveal 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.¹⁷⁵ Martinoli continued to oversee the Center in Trieste, which was re-named the *Centro per la Razza* in 1944, along with the other former Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem; he was promoted to a position at the national level in the RSI apparatus in spring 1944. On behalf of the Trieste ‘Center for Race’ Martinoli engaged in tenacious attempts from November 1943 onward to recover funds he claimed were owed by the Ministry of Culture, funding which had been disrupted during the Badoglio

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 358. Cf. Bon, *Gli Ebrei a Trieste*, 297.

¹⁷¹ Vinci, *Trieste in guerra*, 90.

¹⁷² Hametz, “The Ambivalence of Italian Antisemitism,” 393.

¹⁷³ Mayda, *Ebrei sotto Salò*, 46.

¹⁷⁴ Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 226.

¹⁷⁵ Prefect Tamburini, for example, became chief of police of the RSI in October 1943.

interregnum.¹⁷⁶ He was supported in this effort by the new Prefect as well as by the German ‘advisor’ for the province of Trieste.¹⁷⁷ The resulting exchange of financial documents offers a glimpse of the Trieste Center’s fiscal status.¹⁷⁸ In February 1944 Martinoli argued that the Center needed to intensify its activities again, an assertion consistent with his previous focus on the “internal front” of Jewish influence within the Fascist camp itself.¹⁷⁹ 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

¹⁷⁶ AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923-1952) b. 484 f. 318: Bruno Coceani, Prefect of Trieste, to Ministry of Popular Culture in Salò, November 6, 1943, forwarding Martinoli’s request for funds for the Trieste Center, and Martinoli’s February 9, 1944 letter detailing the Center’s finances; 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.

¹⁷⁷ Prefect Coceani’s correspondence indicates skepticism toward some of Martinoli’s claims, but supports the Trieste Center’s requests for funding. In a February 17, 1944 letter to the Ministry of Popular Culture, Coceani expressed doubt that the Center actually had much to do anymore, but said he was inclined to let it continue its work under Martinoli even though the Germans had taken over all tasks related to the Jewish question. The German adviser for Trieste, Dr. Hinteregger, on the other hand, was a persistent advocate for Martinoli and his Center, addressing a series of increasingly stern missives to various agencies requesting compliance with Martinoli’s appeals. Hinteregger’s first such request, on his letterhead as *Der Deutsche Berater für die Provinz Triest*, is 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.

¹⁷⁸ In addition to the information contained in Martinoli’s three-page letter from February 9, 1944 (which, in light of the self-interested nature of the Center’s claims, may include inflated figures), the balance sheet he attached to the letter, dated December 31, 1943, on letterhead of the *Centro Triestino per lo Studio del Problema Ebraico*, provides some sense of the Center’s finances. Between June 1942 and June 1943 the Center received 15,833 Lira from the Ministry of Popular Culture as part of a total budget of slightly over 100,000 Lira. Donations for the year totaled 41,000 Lira, while loans totaled 37,000 Lira. The largest expenses were travel (29,000 Lira), salaries (25,000 Lira) and “transfers and reimbursements” (23,000 Lira).

¹⁷⁹ This stance is reflected in the November 1942 report titled “Propaganda nemica – ebraismo – fronte interno” prepared by the Trieste Center, 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: 268-281; an English translation is available in De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 735-44.

authorities, and under the RSI this took the form of a spectrum of mutually competing agencies administering various aspects of the race laws.¹⁸⁰ At the nominal center of this bureaucratic complex stood the *Ispettorato Generale per la Razza*, the General Inspectorate for Race, headed by Preziosi. Though often overshadowed by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Finance, the Inspectorate developed a distinctive profile during its one year of existence. Created in March 1944, the 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.¹⁸¹ In Preziosi’s view, an insufficiently rigorous application of the 1938-1939 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.”¹⁸² While Jews remained the primary target of the Inspectorate, Preziosi also wanted to extend its tasks to collecting information on “the activities of Freemasonry, plutocracy, and occult political forces.”¹⁸³ He continued to hold Martinoli and the Trieste Center in high regard.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ For an overview see Liliana Picciotto Fargion, “The Anti-Jewish Policy of the Italian Social Republic (1943-1945)” *Yad Vashem Studies* 17 (1986), 17-49.

¹⁸¹ Mussolini appointed Preziosi General Inspector for Race on March 13, 1944, though the Inspectorate itself was not officially inaugurated until April 18. 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 the substantial file ACS RSI PCM b. 4 f. 3096, with eleven *sottofascicoli*. There has been a recent surge in scholarship on the topic; two of the best studies include 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; for helpful context on antisemitism in the RSI beyond the Inspectorate see 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.

¹⁸² Preziosi’s January 31, 1944 memorandum to Mussolini, ACS RSI SPD/CR b. 24 f. 166: 268-281. The passage is quoted in Sarfatti, *La Repubblica sociale italiana a Desenzano*, 165, and De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 742. According to Pichetto, “Le radici ideologiche e culturali dell’antisemitismo di Giovanni Preziosi,” 44, Preziosi sent a copy of the same memorandum, which he wrote in Munich, to Hitler.

¹⁸³ Undated draft of new administrative statutes for the *Ispettorato Generale per la Razza*, ACS RSI PCM b. 4 f. 3096. The proposal, probably from August 1944, was evidently turned down by other agencies.

¹⁸⁴ See Preziosi’s September 20, 1944 memorandum to Mussolini, boasting of the achievements of the *Centri per la Razza* and highlighting the Trieste Center in particular, ACS RSI PCM b. 4 f. 3096. On

Martinoli was named Chief of the Division of Press and Propaganda in the General Inspectorate for Race at its founding.¹⁸⁵ He continued in this capacity until the final defeat of Fascism. Responsibility for the propaganda division meant supervising the bulk of the Inspectorate's accomplishments, as the agency never managed to stake out a significant role in promulgating its own racial legislation, securing enforcement powers, or confiscating Jewish property, despite Preziosi's strenuous efforts.¹⁸⁶ Its foremost task was indoctrination, with Martinoli in charge of operations. Much of the publicity generated by the Inspectorate was channeled through the Centers for Race, and Martinoli co-authored the handbook designed to guide their work.¹⁸⁷ Proclaiming the "biological-spiritual unity of race," the goal of the Centers was to help the Italian nation recognize "the true enemy" and confront "the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy

the further development of the Trieste Center see Preziosi's December 29, 1944 letter to Cocceani, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923-1952) b. 374 f. 76.

¹⁸⁵ See the August 13, 1944 "Elenco dei funzionari e del personale dell'Ispettorato Generale per la Razza" and the related list from July 6, 1944 in ACS RSI PCM b. 4 f. 3096; Martinoli is identified here with a slightly variant title, "Capo Div. Studi e Propaganda," appearing fourth from the top in the organizational hierarchy. For the more current title see 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.

¹⁸⁶ Drafts of proposed racial regulations from the RSI can be found in ACS RSI SPD/CR b. 42 f. 385 and ACS RSI SPD/CR b. 24 f. 166 sf. 3. Equally relevant material is contained in AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923-1952) b. 367 f. 76, including 1944 records from the Inspectorate; what emerges from these documents is that the Germans were clearly in charge of race policy, and that the Ministries of Interior and Finance had considerably greater influence than the Inspectorate, but the Prefect's office still paid substantial attention to the directives of the Inspectorate. For additional context see Michele Sarfatti, "Le leggi antiebraiche proposte nel 1944 da Giovanni Preziosi" in Sarfatti, ed., *La Repubblica sociale italiana a Desenzano*, 141-71. 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.

¹⁸⁷ Ispettorato Generale per la Razza, *Centri Italiani per la Razza: Ordinamento delle attività* (Bergamo: Cattaneo, 1944); the two named authors in the body of the text are Martinoli and Giovanni Pestalozza, Secretary of the Inspectorate and coordinator of the Centers for Race. Martinoli, identified here as "Capo Divisione Stampa e Propaganda," wrote the two central programmatic sections: "Indirizzi programmatici dei Centri Italiani per la Razza" (7-16) and "Istruzioni ai Dirigenti" (23-25). Most of the rest of the 40 page booklet consists of statutes and organizational summaries. The document appears to be rare; I consulted the copy in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Rome.

which has disoriented the people.”¹⁸⁸ Martinoli wrote that 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.”¹⁸⁹

According to Martinoli, “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.” In this way, the Italian people can be protected from “corrupting influences” and “the contamination of its spiritual faculties” so that “the Aryan spirit of the Italian race” will remain safe from “international Jewry.” Delineating the contours of “the struggle against Judaism and Masonry,” Martinoli compared Jews to carriers of a contagious disease who must be quarantined; a people that does not ward off the threat of Jewish infection leaves itself open to “every kind of contamination.”¹⁹⁰ But Mussolini had redeemed Italy from this fate, and would lead the nation to racial re-birth.¹⁹¹ 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.”¹⁹² Such projects aspired to

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., ii, 4.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 7, 10. The duty of the Centers was thus “to arouse anti-Jewish consciousness” (26).

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 16: “Il nostro popolo ha qualità di razza altissime, ancora in parte latenti, che devono essere sviluppate e dispiegate mediante il sorgere di una vera coscienza di razza. [...] In Italia si è levata pure una voce potente che parla della razza agli italiani: la voce di Benito Mussolini, che da oltre un quarto di secolo risuona risvegliatrice del nostro popolo. Alla voce di Benito Mussolini si riattacca il movimento italiano per la razza. Di là della rovina materiale nella quale siamo caduti, dobbiamo comprendere che la creazione mussoliniana è sempre viva e saldamente potente come forza spirituale della nostra razza, come incitamento alla rinascita, come realtà superiore che non può morire, e che, in un'Italia purificata dalla sventura, risorgerà.”

¹⁹² On the “Ufficio del problema ebraico-massonico” see *ibid.*, 17-20, and on the “Ufficio del pensiero razziale” see 20-21. Much of their attention was concentrated within the party itself and within the government of the RSI, where unwitting agents of Freemasonry and Jewry were suspected at every turn.

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, but 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 represent this committed antisemitic tendency and push it forward.¹⁹³ Carrying out this task required a constant state of alert; under the motto “Keep your eyes open!” the staff of the Centers were warned not to be “lured by clandestine emissaries of Judeo-Masonry.”¹⁹⁴ Spreading the principles of spiritual racism continued to be their 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, including works by Preziosi, Evola, and Scaligero.¹⁹⁵

The importance of the General Inspectorate for Race should not be overstated. By the time it was established, all significant aspects of antisemitic policy were de facto in German hands, and with the Allied military advance Preziosi and his colleagues oversaw a steadily shrinking territory. Most of the Inspectorate’s concrete proposals were caught up in bureaucratic wrangling with other RSI ministries and never became law. The history of the *Ispettorato Generale per la Razza* nevertheless provides a striking image of spiritual racism’s realization in the context of Fascism, and indicates unambiguously what its aims looked like in practice, if only briefly and under notable constraints. Through their positions in the Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem, the Centers for Race, and the General Inspectorate for Race, Del

¹⁹³ Ibid., 25. Martinoli claims here that the Protocols of the Elders of Zion provide a complete account of the Jewish plan for world domination. He also employs traces of esoteric and anthroposophical vocabulary in this text, using the terminology of “sub-races” and arguing that particular races and peoples have specific missions and so forth.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 38.

¹⁹⁵ Raspanti, “L’Ispettorato generale per la razza,” 130.

Massa and Martinoli served as crucial conduits for a radicalized version of esoteric antisemitism.¹⁹⁶

Despite this remarkable record, direct connections to these authors' anthroposophical orientation appear somewhat tenuous, as they did not typically refer to Steiner directly. A significant exception is an article by Martinoli celebrating Steiner in Preziosi's journal in June 1943, on the eve of Fascism's first downfall.¹⁹⁷ The article includes very lengthy quotes from Steiner, in the pages of the major mouthpiece for militant racism within the Italian Fascist movement, presenting anthroposophy as the way of the future and the continuation of Fascism in spiritual form. Martinoli also quotes his fellow anthroposophist Scaligero, and even enlists Evola as a champion of Steiner. His portrait of the founder of anthroposophy gives particular emphasis to Steiner's rejection of democracy and characterizes Steiner as a devoted German patriot, while making much of Steiner's Aryan racial roots.¹⁹⁸ Above all Martinoli stresses "the perfect correspondence between Steiner's thought and the most basic tendencies of Fascism and National Socialism in the political, social, and spiritual camp."¹⁹⁹ In a section on Steiner's "critique of British policy, of Judaism, and of Masonic-plutocratic influence," Martinoli reports that Steiner "became well-known as an antisemite" during his Vienna period, due to his articles on "the Jewish question" from the 1880s, and continued this pattern in his mature anthroposophical period as well: "In numerous lectures in the years 1917 and 1918 he also directly confronted the

¹⁹⁶ As noted in chapter 4, the anthroposophical variety of esoteric antisemitism may be seen as a subsidiary form of "redemptive anti-Semitism," which Friedländer characterizes as "a kind of crusade to redeem the world by eliminating the Jews." Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (New York: Harper, 2007), xviii. For additional context on the image of the Jew as enemy of humankind see Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹⁹⁷ Ettore Martinoli, "Un preannunziatore della nuova Europa: Rudolf Steiner" *La Vita Italiana* June 1943, 555-66.

¹⁹⁸ See the sections "Rudolf Steiner e le democrazie" and "Rudolf Steiner e la sua patria tedesca," 558-62, 565-66.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 562.

influence of Jewish intellectualism within European civilization.”²⁰⁰ Martinoli’s article concludes:

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 movement – a movement not only political but spiritual – introduced into the world by the two parallel revolutions, the Fascist revolution and the National Socialist revolution, to which Steiner ideally belongs as a true predecessor and spiritual pioneer.²⁰¹

For Fascist anthroposophists like Martinoli, Steiner was not only the herald of a New Europe, he decisively presaged Fascism and Nazism and provided a spiritual foundation for antisemitic engagement. This interpretation of Steiner’s work, contested as it may have been by other anthroposophists, helps account for the prominent anthroposophist presence within the current of esoteric racism in Fascist Italy. The esoteric current even found a home within the Italian SS legion, where anthroposophical influences may also have played a role.²⁰² In the figures of Scaligero, Del Massa, and Martinoli, an anthroposophically inflected variant of spiritual racism came to full flower, both in theory and in practice, culminating in the

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 562. Several of the 1918 lectures Martinoli refers to are available in Rudolf Steiner, *The Challenge of the Times* (Spring Valley: Anthroposophic Press, 1941); original edition: Rudolf Steiner, *Die soziale Grundforderung unserer Zeit* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1921).

²⁰¹ Martinoli, “Un preannunziatore della nuova Europa: Rudolf Steiner,” 566.

²⁰² The most substantial source on this topic is of dubious provenance, an oversize illustrated volume for SS admirers and nostalgists, though one based in part on extensive archival materials: Sergio Corbatti and Marco Nava, *Sentire – Pensare – Volere: Storia della Legione SS italiana* (Milan: Ritter, 2001). Drawing on detailed first-hand testimony by Pio Filippini-Ronconi, a follower of Scaligero and former officer in the all-volunteer Italian SS division, the book describes Steiner and anthroposophy as crucial inspirations for the esoteric current within the Italian SS Legion, and claims that the Legion’s symbol, consisting of three crossed arrows, was drawn directly from anthroposophical sources (356-57). Cf. Pio Filippini-Ronconi, “Testimonianze” *Volontari* October 2005, 43-53, and Ricciotti Lazzeri, *Le SS italiane* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1982), 327. Alfonso Piscitelli, “Suggestioni esoteriche nelle SS italiane: Con una testimonianza di Pio Filippini-Ronconi” in de Turris, ed., *Esoterismo e Fascismo*, 369-75, provides additional testimony and more elaborate detail, with central emphasis on the anthroposophical current within the Italian SS. Filippini-Ronconi, an *Obersturmführer* in the Italian SS legion who became a distinguished Orientalist after the war, claims to have invented the threefold symbol himself, based on anthroposophical motifs. In light of Filippini-Ronconi’s own anthroposophist inclinations, this testimony seems plausible, albeit unconfirmable. Filippini-Ronconi remains unabashedly proud of his service in the SS. His contributions to anthroposophist publications include introductions to several of Scaligero’s major post-war works.

conspicuous anthroposophist involvement in applying the racial laws.²⁰³ Inspired by Fascism's ideals, these anthroposophists took a firmly hierarchical view of society, based on occult doctrines of spiritual hierarchy, and extended this model to the realm of race. Their argument was not merely that spiritual ideals were compatible with racial persecution, but that an uncompromising racist campaign represented the height of spiritual striving, the realization of profound spiritual goals.

Italian anthroposophist race theorists drew on a wide spectrum of occultist approaches, refracted through Steiner's teachings, to mold their claims and inform their public statements. They invoked the authority of science even while dismissing its conventional 'materialist' premises. They proffered sweeping political verdicts and clamored for military action while simultaneously trumpeting the superiority of the spiritual realm over worldly circumstances. Their conception of race offered an overarching explanatory framework and 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.

What Scaligero, Del Massa, and Martinoli promoted was a racism that was neither exclusively spiritual nor exclusively biological. Their writings constantly

²⁰³ The previous chapter outlines some of the post-war activities of Scaligero, del Massa, and other anthroposophists within the Italian neo-fascist movement. Martinoli, the most institutionally important anthroposophist figure involved in the implementation of the Fascist race laws, was tried for collaboration in 1946. He was convicted of collaborating with the Nazis and of participating in the leadership of the antisemitic campaign, sentenced to 10 years, and amnestied in 1950. 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. Bon quotes portions of Martinoli's testimony at his trial; several of his statements are incompatible with the archival evidence. Martinoli claimed, for example, that he tried to shut down the Trieste Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem after July 25, 1943, that the Germans requisitioned the Center in mid-October 1943, and that it thus ceased to exist from that time onward. These assertions are belied by the documents in the Archivio di Stato di Trieste.

emphasized the link between biological and spiritual aspects of race, and portrayed this very synthesis as a uniquely Aryan virtue. Integrating these two dimensions in the context of esoteric antisemitism produced a distinctively ambitious series of racial demands.²⁰⁴ These included not just ‘hygienic’ measures, selection policies, eugenic controls, and protective steps to avert racial pollution, but even more fundamental methods of attaining purification through spiritual vigilance that could fend off the ever-present threat of Jewish infiltration. If ‘materialist’ forms of racism heeded only the bodily manifestations of racial character, the anthroposophical variety of ‘spiritual racism’ probed deeper in pursuit of hidden dangers. Occult principles helped shape this quest for an unyielding and total racism. Race mixture, for the esoteric racists, disturbed the harmony of the spirit-soul-body triad and caused racial decline, while debasing the heritage of the Aryan spirit. What such considerations eventually required was the elimination of the enemy.

By incorporating Roman myths and Fascist motifs into this framework, anthroposophical race theorists succeeded in re-working Steiner’s original Germanic emphasis to encompass Italian racial identity as a spiritual factor, integrated into an esoteric conception of Aryan racial consciousness as well as a political endorsement of National Socialism. In this regard they stood out as exponents of a specifically Italian racial vision, rather than mere imitators of Nazi race ideology, even as they re-claimed and re-shaped anthroposophist ideas about race and nation. The ‘spiritual racism’ espoused by Scaligero, Del Massa, and Martinoli was not simply a vague catch-word

²⁰⁴ Recent scholarship has begun to make the case that by positing the Jew as the absolute enemy, this form of esoteric antisemitism left no room for a ‘solution’ to the ‘Jewish question’ other than elimination, and thereby helped prepare the ground for an exterminatory program. For a particularly powerful version of this argument, centered on Preziosi and Evola, see Cassata, “Guerra all’ebreo,” 69-71. Cassata, 73-74, also includes Scaligero in the current of race theorists who helped prepare Italians for a genocidal ‘solution’ of the ‘Jewish problem’. In this sense, the eliminationist and tendentially exterminationist variant of antisemitic racism espoused by Scaligero, Del Massa, and Martinoli differed significantly from the hyper-assimilationist views of many German anthroposophists.

meant to provide a cosmetic differentiation of Fascist racial policy from its overweening northern neighbor. It had definite and detailed content, and insistently urged the Italian racist campaign toward more drastic measures in ferreting out and confronting the Jewish enemy. Its proponents demonstrated their own commitment to this racial ideal through energetic participation as unwavering wardens of the 'defense of the race.' If only for a brief period, spiritual racism in power marked a fateful junction in the multifaceted history of the interaction between occultism and fascism.

Conclusion

Occultism and Fascism in Historical Perspective

Since the defeat of Nazism and Fascism in 1945, the general ignominy attached to both regimes has often hindered dispassionate historical assessment of movements and tendencies associated with them. Because Nazism in particular was responsible for overwhelming crimes against humanity, the usual standards of impartial scholarly analysis seem inadequate to the task of understanding its origins and development. The historical experience of Nazism and Fascism can have a distorting effect on perceptions of the past, and especially on efforts to make sense of the racial, ethnic, and national ideologies that undergirded these regimes and legitimated their actions. Varieties of racist or antisemitic thought that differed in some substantial way from their Nazi counterparts can pale in comparison with the ideas that led to Auschwitz. In such a situation it is even more important, albeit difficult, to try to understand movements and worldviews that operated in the orbit of Nazism and Fascism as historical subjects in their own right, to analyze them within their own contexts, and to determine what factors shaped their encounter with the states and societies erected by Mussolini and Hitler and their devoted followers.

The challenges involved in coming to terms with fascist politics as a historical phenomenon are heightened in the case of occultism. Whether viewed as a spiritual science or as a minority religious current, occultism resists standard categories and classifications and complicates efforts toward objectivity. What its practitioners tout as incomparable wisdom is dismissed by detractors as empty pretension. In historical perspective, the choices made by esoteric adherents facing the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy sometimes appear difficult to understand; self-proclaimed profound knowledge of the mysteries of the universe seems to have gone hand in hand with

remarkable naiveté about basic political and social circumstances. But the certainties of posterity are rarely commensurable with the perplexities of the past, and informed historical judgement calls for a more differentiated approach. This does not mean exonerating occult believers who collaborated in fascist undertakings, or excusing esoteric forms of racial and ethnic thought because they were not immediately responsible for genocide. It means attempting to piece together the contradictory but interwoven strands of complicity and diffidence that marked occultist engagements with fascism.

Such a procedure demands greater attention to the complexities inherent in the notions of race and nation. Neither Nazi nor Fascist racial thinking was as simple and straightforward as they are sometimes depicted; Nazi race theory was not merely biological, and Fascist racial ideology was not simply spiritual. Like many versions of race thinking, both combined biological and spiritual elements in an unsteady amalgam. The points of contact, overlap, affinity and convergence with esoteric racial teachings were multiple, substantial, and worthy of extended scholarly inquiry. Theosophy and anthroposophy aimed to transcend the shortcomings of established science and improve on its record; occultists, in short, wanted to do better than science had in understanding the world and enhancing it. Regarding race, they failed. Occult racial thought recapitulated and exacerbated the flaws of mainstream race science while imbuing these flaws with the nimbus of timeless wisdom. This rendered esoteric conceptions of race as amenable to fascist appropriation as standard biological conceptions. The details of this history do not counsel complacency; a recent study of the subject concludes by noting that the significance of debates over the role of race within various forms of fascism “may fade in comparison with the possibility that racism lies at the core of the modern nation and modernity itself.”¹

¹ Gordon, “Race” in Bosworth, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, 315.

Theosophy and anthroposophy preached a message of universal brotherhood and tolerance. These teachings were sincere. But theosophy and anthroposophy also posited a distinctive set of racial doctrines and instilled them with great cosmic significance. Those doctrines are built around a stratified framework of racial hierarchy and mapped onto a sweeping narrative of evolutionary progress to yield a potent racial mythology combining elements of Aryan superiority, cyclical processes of racial advance and decline, and a version of spiritual eugenics leading to the emergence of higher racial forms at the expense of lower racial forms. For the most part, these ideas remain part of theosophy and anthroposophy today, largely unexamined and unchallenged. Although it may be comforting to think that such ideas pose little current danger because they are part of marginal occult worldviews, and dismiss them as belonging to the past, this response ignores just how popular and widespread anthroposophical beliefs are within various alternative milieus in the present.²

While both occultism and fascism may seem marginal today, anthroposophy appears to be moving steadily from the margin to the center. The movement Steiner founded a century ago has proven remarkably successful in the contemporary world. There are now more than one thousand Waldorf schools worldwide. Biodynamic products form a preponderant portion of the extensive organic foods market in Germany and other European countries. Anthroposophical physicians represent an established branch of complementary medicine. Weleda is the leading brand in holistic pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, and Demeter products and biodynamic wines fetch premium prices. Theosophical and anthroposophical ideas circulate throughout the New Age milieu and within various new religious movements. Burgeoning interest in

² As Eric Wolf noted in a different disciplinary context: “What anthropologists tend to relegate to the junk pile of their professional history remains live tinder in the world beyond academe.” (Wolf, “Perilous Ideas: Race, Culture, People,” 412)

alternative spiritualities and unorthodox approaches to science has helped define Steiner's legacy and his movement's public profile. Many anthroposophists have shed the nomenclature of the 'occult' and refurbished their teachings as a sophisticated framework for engaging questions of personal growth and social responsibility. The promise of deep wisdom, exceptional knowledge, and genuine community continues to attract admirers and adherents.

Anthroposophy's present success makes it all the more important to understand its complicated past. In several ways, the contemporary face of anthroposophy differs strikingly from the earlier movement examined here. While my analysis has accentuated anthroposophy's historical links to authoritarian, reactionary, and racist currents, the movement today is principally associated with tolerant, progressive, and cosmopolitan tendencies. Viewed in historical perspective, these contrasts are not as paradoxical as they might appear. General shifts in political and cultural orientation since the pivotal period in the middle of the twentieth century have reversed the ideological poles of more than one minority worldview. Even if anthroposophy revolves around the same conceptual axis as it did in Steiner's day, its current public affiliations have altered substantially. Yet as with any historical phenomenon, traces of the past persist within the present composition of the movement. Anthroposophy's accomplishments in various fields mean that these traces merit attention beyond the borders of Steiner's movement itself. For those concerned with the prospects for alternative education, alternative agriculture, alternative medicine, or alternative spirituality, for example, engaging with anthroposophy's history can shed unexpected light on contemporary questions.

With the increasing visibility and public stature of anthroposophist projects, Steiner's doctrines have received growing scrutiny from outside the anthroposophical movement. The encounter between an esoteric worldview and its secular surroundings

has not always been smooth. This is particularly true of Waldorf schooling, which in addition to its many champions has generated extended criticism from former pupils, parents, and teachers, as well as other educators, journalists, and scholars. One of the more contentious issues in these ongoing debates centers on the standing of Steiner's racial theories within current anthroposophist institutions. Enthusiasts of Waldorf education or biodynamic agriculture are often unaware of these theories, and committed anthroposophists are often reluctant to disavow them. The racial ideas expounded by pre-war anthroposophists did not simply disappear from the movement's publications after 1945, and figures like Karutz and Scaligero continued to be honored.³ The problem is compounded by the unabated interest in racial spirits and national souls in some quarters of the latter-day anthroposophist scene.

A general anthroposophical reluctance to confront the unexamined aspects of the movement's past has exacerbated these tensions between anthroposophy's self-conception and its public perception. From an external vantage point, anthroposophist

³ A notice published in *Was in der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft vorgeht - Nachrichten für die Mitglieder* February 8, 1948, 21, gives a sense of the prevailing approach. Sponsored by the *Naturwissenschaftliche Sektion* of the Anthroposophical Society, Wolfgang Moldenhauer offered a lecture series on "Völkerkunde als Symptomatologie des Kulturverfalls," describing the content as follows: "Es soll in freien Vorträgen, Referaten und Gesprächen das Wesen der farbigen Rassenstämme zur Darstellung kommen. Es soll untersucht werden, inwiefern in den stufenweise geordneten Überresten vergangener Menschheits-Epochen nicht eigentlich Zeugnisse der Evolution, sondern sukzessiven Niederganges und Fall in die Materie zu erkennen sind, und inwieweit dieser Prozess auch für die Zukunft zu befürchten und zu verhindern ist." For further examples of anthroposophist race thinking after 1945 see Ernst Uehli, "Mondenevolution und Menschenschicksal" *Das Goetheanum* January 25, 1948, 27-28, and February 22, 1948, 58-60; 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; Max Stibbe, "Het ontwaken der gekleurde rassen" *Vrije Opvoedkunst* September 1961, 44-58; Poeppig, *Das Zeitalter der Atlantis und die Eiszeit*; Gleich, *Siebentausend Jahre Urgeschichte der Menschheit*; Nicholas Lee, ed., *Invisible Africa: A Search for the Grail in Africa* (Kenilworth: Novalis Press, 1987). See also the very positive retrospectives on Karutz and Uehli in *Die Drei* April 1965, 139-40, as well as Ernst Weissert, "Ernst Uehli" *Die Drei* January 1960, 50-52, and Walter Bopp, "Zum 100. Geburtstag von Professor Richard Karutz" *Die Drei* February 1968, 39-40. Many of the works examined in previous chapters have been re-published by anthroposophist presses since 1945, including Uehli's *Atlantis und das Rätsel der Eiszeitkunst* in 1957, Uehli's *Nordisch-Germanische Mythologie als Mysteriengeschichte* in 1965, von Gleich's *Der Mensch der Eiszeit und Atlantis* in 1990, and Thieben's *Das Rätsel des Judentums* in 1991.

claims about the Nazi era can sometimes seem absurd or abhorrent, as when SS war criminal Otto Ohlendorf, who was tried at Nuremberg and executed for his role in the holocaust, is said to have “rescued thousands of Jews.”⁴ Even in less historically fraught cases, anthroposophist perspectives on political topics can be markedly at odds with non-anthroposophist perspectives, as when anthroposophist Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the late dictator of Georgia, is cast as a hero and martyr.⁵ Stances like these have made the anthroposophical movement overall appear historically and politically confused, at best, in the eyes of skeptical observers, notwithstanding the positive contributions of Waldorf pedagogy, biodynamic farming, and related endeavors. In several instances this dynamic has led to a cycle of public accusation and recrimination between Steiner’s followers and their critics, and on occasion the threat of government action. In 2007 Germany’s federal ministry for family affairs considered placing two of Steiner’s books on its list of literature hazardous to youth, on the grounds that the content of the books was racially discriminatory, but eventually opted for a less

⁴ Hauschka, *At the Dawn of a New Age*, 74. On Ohlendorf’s continuing sympathy for anthroposophy during and after his trial see 79-80. Hauschka’s portrait of Ohlendorf is entirely heroic, and his tone toward the Nuremberg trials is openly scornful. Similar portrayals of Ohlendorf can be found in other anthroposophist sources; see e.g. Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung* vol. IV, 35. Ohlendorf was the principal defendant in the Nuremberg *Einsatzgruppen* trial and was executed in 1951. Anthroposophist Werner Georg Haverbeck, Ohlendorf’s pastor in the last years of his life, presided at his funeral.

⁵ Gamsakhurdia (1939-1993), a former dissident and human rights campaigner during the Soviet era, became the first anthroposophist head of state when he was elected president of newly independent Georgia in 1991. His rule soon turned authoritarian and was widely criticized for human rights abuses and ethnic chauvinism. Gamsakhurdia, a vociferous Georgian nationalist and proponent of the “spiritual mission of Georgia,” initiated a “Georgia for the Georgians” campaign aimed against ethnic minorities in the country. He was deposed in a coup and died in exile under unclear circumstances. Gamsakhurdia was a member of the Anthroposophical Society and a supporter of Waldorf schools, biodynamic agriculture, and Steiner’s ‘social threefolding’ program. For extremely positive portraits in anthroposophist media see Judith Krischik, “Ein Kulturträger und Kämpfer: Der georgische Präsident Swiad Gamsachurdia” *Das Goetheanum* 70 (1991), 39-41, and “Interview mit Swiad Gamsachurdia” *ibid.*, 155-62; a brief anthroposophist biography is available in von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 204-05. A full-length biography by his son, who fled to Dornach after Gamsakhurdia’s death, was published by an anthroposophist press: Konstantin Gamsachurdia, *Swiad Gamsachurdia: Dissident - Präsident - Märtyrer* (Basel: Perseus, 1995). For background see Ghia Nodia, “Political Turmoil in Georgia and the Ethnic Policies of Zviad Gamsakhurdia” in Bruno Coppieters, ed., *Contested Borders in the Caucasus* (Brussels: Vrije Universiteit, 1996), 73-89, and Robert English, “Georgia: The Ignored History” *New York Review of Books* November 6, 2008, 21-23.

restrictive solution.⁶ Media reports on anthroposophist activities remain similarly divided.

In Germany and in other countries, disputes of this sort often follow a familiar sequence of polemic and apologia. Faced with the apparent obscurities of occult doctrine and practice, criticism of anthroposophist beliefs can easily turn contemptuous, while those who see themselves as cultivating a path-breaking form of spiritual science are liable to react defensively toward virtually any external evaluation.⁷ These clashes arise frequently in esoteric contexts.⁸ They can be particularly challenging when the intersection between the esoteric and exoteric aspects of anthroposophy are at stake, when the education of children or the production of food or the provision of health care sparks inquiries about the underlying philosophy. Such practical concerns present compelling reasons for those

⁶ The commission appointed by the ministry concluded that both books do indeed contain racist material, but did not place them on the index, because the anthroposophist publisher agreed to re-publish new editions with critical commentary on the offending passages. The books in question were *The Mission of the Folk Souls* and *The Being of Man and His Future Evolution*.

⁷ Anthroposophist rejection of external scrutiny has a lengthy history; for classic examples see Heyer, *Wie man gegen Rudolf Steiner kämpft*; Levy, *Rudolf Steiners Weltanschauung und ihre Gegner*; Boldt, *Rudolf Steiner: Ein Kämpfer gegen seine Zeit*; Steiner, *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Gegner*; Louis Werbeck, *Eine Gegnerschaft als Kulturverfallserscheinung: Die Gegner Rudolf Steiners und der Anthroposophie durch sie selbst widerlegt* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1924). More recent examples include *Feldzug gegen Rudolf Steiner* (Flensburger Hefte 1998); Walter Kugler, *Feindbild Steiner* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 2001); Kugler, *Rudolf Steiner: Wie manche ihn sehen und andere wahrnehmen* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 2008). The charges leveled against non-anthroposophist critics are remarkably consistent: failure to understand Steiner's teachings, focus on minor details, anti-esoteric bias, falsifying quotations, fabrication of evidence, and so forth, sometimes posited as part of a conspiracy against anthroposophy. For background on the broader dynamics cf. Olav Hammer and Kocku von Stuckrad, "Introduction: Western Esotericism and Polemics" in Hammer and Stuckrad, eds., *Polemical Encounters: Esoteric Discourse and Its Others* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), vii-xxii; Theo Hetteema and Arie van der Kooij, eds., *Religious Polemics in Context* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004); Hubert Cancik, "Apologetik/Polemik" in Hubert Cancik, Burkhard Gladigow and Matthias Laubscher, eds., *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* vol. II (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1990), 29-37.

⁸ Several of my own earlier publications on anthroposophy contributed to this cycle of polemic and apologia, particularly a series of articles from 2000 and 2001 commissioned by two Scandinavian journals. These articles provoked indignant responses from a variety of anthroposophists, and their charges provide important context for understanding subsequent debates on anthroposophy's history. Interested readers can find representative replies at anthroposophist websites: www.defendingsteiner.com; www.waldorfanswers.com; www.americans4waldorf.org.

with little interest in the occult to take these questions seriously.⁹ Stepping back from the immediate issues to adopt a historical perspective provides an opportunity to move beyond polemic and apologia, though it cannot simply avoid the tensions intrinsic to the topic. The contested heritage of occultism and fascism harbors its own risks.

The eclipse of classical fascism in 1945 led many Germans and Italians to re-assess their own choices and re-think the priorities of a now compromised past. This process yielded varying degrees of honest self-reckoning and obdurate denial as well as common patterns of avoidance and deflection. Anthroposophists have almost uniformly preferred a one-sided narrative of their movement's history during the Third Reich, viewing themselves and their forebears as victims of Nazism. This view has deterred a meaningful internal consideration of and confrontation with the less reassuring aspects of anthroposophy's past. The lack of critical historical engagement has in turn contributed to the ongoing presence of far-right elements within anthroposophy. But the predominant public image of anthroposophical projects today is usually identified with liberal and left inclinations, particularly in progressive education and environmental consciousness. This shift from right to left over the course of anthroposophy's century-long existence, accelerated by the political and cultural transformations associated with the 1960s, is perhaps most noticeable in the role played by Steiner's followers in the rise of the German Greens.

⁹ In the German context, polemical accounts have at times made important contributions to public discussion of anthroposophy, though they do not meet scholarly standards. Jutta Ditzfurth, *Feuer in die Herzen* (Hamburg: Carlsen, 1992) brought anthroposophy's racial theories and far-right affiliations to public attention. See also Rainer Alich, "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 Kern and Traynor, eds., *Die esoterische Verführung*, 129-58; Herbert Rätz, *Die Religion der Reinheit: Reformbewegung, Okkultismus und Nationalismus – Geschichte und Struktur einer Alltagsreligion* (Bad Homburg: Morlant, 2001). Other polemical critiques of anthroposophy have in some ways detracted from informed debate of the subject, such as Guido Grandt and Michael Grandt, *Schwarzbuch Anthroposophie: Rudolf Steiners okkult-rassistische Weltanschauung* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 1997). The most thorough critical account, with extensive original research, is Peter Bierl, *Wurzelrassen, Erzengel und Volksgeister: Die Anthroposophie Rudolf Steiners und die Waldorfpädagogik* (Hamburg: Konkret, 2005).

According to standard accounts, German anthroposophists “played a significant role in the formation of the Green Party,” with its ecological and pacifist orientation and irreverent approach to political affairs.¹⁰ Other scholars note that anthroposophy had a “decisive influence on the philosophy of the German Greens” in their early years.¹¹ Many anthroposophists involved in the initial development of the Greens were gathered around organizations such as the *Aktionsgemeinschaft Unabhängiger Deutscher*, the *Aktion Dritter Weg*, and the so-called *Achberger Kreis*.¹² Central figures included August Haußleiter, Wilfried Heidt, Baldur Springmann, and the artist Joseph Beuys. A number of observers note that these tendencies within the nascent Green milieu represented ‘right’ currents as much as ‘left’ ones, and once the Greens overall moved toward the left, several of their more conservative founders, along with part of the anthroposophist wing, broke with the Greens to form a series of small right-wing ecological parties.¹³ In this sense, anthroposophist participation in the early stages of the Greens may be seen less as a

¹⁰ Andrei Markovits and Philip Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 105.

¹¹ Gayil Talshir, *The Political Ideology of Green Parties* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 91.

¹² Cf. Talshir, *Political Ideology of Green Parties*, xvii, 43-50, 91-97, 163; Rudolf van Hüllen, *Ideologie und Machtkampf bei den Grünen* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1990), 141-48, 162-68, 213-15, 246-51, 287, 294, 309-10, 515-19; Werner Hülsberg, *The German Greens: A Social and Political Profile* (London: Verso, 1988), 84-90; Eva Kolinsky, ed., *The Greens in West Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 1989), 99-101; E. Gene Frankland and Donald Schoonmaker, *Between Protest and Power: The Green Party in Germany* (Boulder: Westview, 1992), 105-06, 127-30; Wolf-Dieter Hasenclever and Connie Hasenclever, *Grüne Zeiten: Politik für eine lebenswerte Zukunft* (Munich: Kösel, 1982), 15-18, 50-53, 217-18; Joachim Raschke, *Die Grünen: Wie sie wurden, was sie sind* (Cologne: Bund, 1993), 144-49; Horst Mewes, “A Brief History of the German Green Party” in Margit Mayer and John Ely, eds., *The German Greens: Paradox between Movement and Party* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 34-35.

¹³ For context see Richard Stöss, *Vom Nationalismus zum Umweltschutz* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1980), 221-23, 229, 239, 277-78, and Jürgen Wüst, *Konservatismus und Ökologiebewegung* (Frankfurt: Verlag für interkulturelle Kommunikation, 1993). A further anthroposophical figure in right-wing ecological circles is Reinhard Falter, co-editor of the Swiss anthroposophist journal *Novalis: Zeitschrift für spirituelles Denken* and a frequent contributor to other anthroposophist publications. For a perceptive critical analysis see Ulrich Linse, “‘Fundamentalistischer’ Heimatschutz: Die ‘Naturphilosophie’ Reinhard Falters” in Puschner and Großmann, eds., *Völkisch und national*, 156-78.

shift from right to left and more as a continuation of the left-right crossover that has marked anthroposophical politics from the beginning.

Anthroposophy's political Janus face is illustrated by the contrasting careers of Otto Schily and Werner Georg Haverbeck, well-known figures on the post-war German left and right respectively, with equally colorful but sharply divergent pasts. Schily, a radical lawyer in the 1970s who defended members of the Red Army Faction, was a prominent founder of the Greens. In 1989 he switched to the Social Democrats, Germany's main center-left party, and in 1998 became Interior Minister in the Social Democratic-Green coalition government. Schily held this powerful post for seven years. Developing politically from the left toward the center, his term as Interior Minister earned him a law-and-order reputation, particularly regarding immigration. A member of the Anthroposophical Society and the son and brother of active anthroposophists, Schily has sometimes been publicly reticent about his personal relationship to anthroposophy.¹⁴ His political career can be seen as an anthroposophist success story and an emblem of the movement's integration into the mainstream.

Haverbeck also played a role in the early stages of the German Greens. A generation older than Schily, in the 1930s he was a young Nazi functionary and a proponent of environmental protection within the Nazi party. Haverbeck was a protégé of Rudolf Hess, a student of Herman Wirth, and leader of the *Reichsbund Volkstum und Heimat*.¹⁵ After 1945 he worked as a Christian Community pastor for a decade

¹⁴ "I am not an anthroposophist myself, but I am a member of the Anthroposophical Society." Schily quoted in Peter Gatter, *Die Aufsteiger: Ein politisches Porträt der Grünen* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1987), 136. Schily wrote a substantial epilogue for the current edition of Steiner's book on 'social threefolding,' *Die Kernpunkte der sozialen Frage*, published by the Rudolf Steiner Verlag, and he invokes Steiner in his speeches and writings. See also the interview with Schily under the title "Für mich sind Engel Realität" in Hanno Gerwin, *Was Deutschlands Prominente glauben* (Munich: Goldmann, 2006), 190-95.

¹⁵ On Haverbeck's activities in the Nazi era and the role of the *Reichsbund Volkstum und Heimat* see Uekoetter, *The Green and the Brown: A History of Conservation in Nazi Germany*, 58-60; Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany*, 99-104; Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature*, 177-79; and Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg und seine Gegner*, 47-50, 71-72, 267-75.

and founded various right-wing organizations, with an emphasis on environmental issues. Until his death in 1999, Haverbeck maintained a high profile on the nationalist right and in ecological circles and was a focal point of the far-right fringe of anthroposophy, while also publishing with mainstream anthroposophist presses. His forthright portrait of Steiner as a fervent German nationalist incurred opprobrium from other anthroposophists.¹⁶ The institute he founded, the *Collegium Humanum*, which hosted anthroposophical and ecological as well as neo-Nazi activities, was shut down by the German government in 2008 as a center of right-wing extremism.

Anthroposophists often view Haverbeck's legacy as an embarrassment.

That political figures as different as Schily and Haverbeck both found crucial inspiration in anthroposophy testifies to the ideological elasticity of Steiner's teachings as well as to the divergent political potentials of an ostensibly apolitical esotericism. But the very same eclecticism reflects a longstanding pattern among adherents of occult and New Age worldviews: a reluctance to examine the implicit and explicit political ramifications of alternative spiritual approaches. This reticence helps account for the peculiar juxtapositions to be found within the anthroposophical milieu,

¹⁶ Werner Haverbeck, *Rudolf Steiner: Anwalt für Deutschland* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1989; second edition Dresden: Zeitenwende, 2001). Background on Haverbeck and his milieu is available in Stöss, *Vom Nationalismus zum Umweltschutz*, 232, 243-44, 247, 250, 253, 256; Wüst, *Konservatismus und Ökologiebewegung*, 67-73, 82-91; Mecklenburg, ed., *Handbuch deutscher Rechtsextremismus*, 319-20, 469-70; Thomas Jahn and Peter Wehling, *Ökologie von rechts: Nationalismus und Umweltschutz bei der Neuen Rechten und den "Republikanern"* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1990), 21-39; Volkmar Wölk, *Natur und Mythos: Ökologiekonzeptionen der 'Neuen' Rechten im Spannungsfeld zwischen Blut und Boden und New Age* (Duisburg: Duisburger Institut für Sprach- und Sozialforschung, 1992); Oliver Geden, *Rechte Ökologie: Umweltschutz zwischen Emanzipation und Faschismus* (Berlin: Elefant, 1996), 53-55, 105-51; 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 followers see Andreas Ferch, *Viermal Deutschland in einem Menschenleben: Werner Georg Haverbeck* (Dresden: Zeitenwende, 2000). For an example of the continuation of this variant of far-right anthroposophy after Haverbeck's death see Andreas Ferch, Bernhard Schaub, and Markus Fernbach, *Ausbruch aus den Ideologien* (Dresden: Zeitenwende, 2001), a celebration of Steiner, Rosenberg, and Evola. Further anthroposophically influenced figures on the radical right have included Günter Bartsch and Baldur Springmann. Far-right occultism is by no means a German peculiarity, as the Italian neofascist scene shows; for an American parallel see Scott Beekman, *William Dudley Pelley: A Life in Right-Wing Extremism and the Occult* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

where enthusiasm for spiritual experimentation, organic food, non-traditional education, and natural medicine occasionally collides with neo-fascist nostalgia and holocaust denial.¹⁷ Recurring incidents along these lines indicate the pitfalls of ignoring the complexities in the movement's past. The resulting contradictions are illuminated by the recent case of Andreas Molau.

In the 1990s Molau was a prominent publicist in far-right German media and served for several years as culture editor of *Junge Freiheit*, one of the more notorious journals on the extreme right. His openly apologetic biography of Nazi leader Alfred Rosenberg was published by a radical right press in 1993.¹⁸ From 2000 onward he became increasingly active in the NDP (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*), the major neo-Nazi party in Germany. Molau also taught history and German at the Waldorf school in the city of Braunschweig from 1996 to 2004. He was fired in 2004 when his NDP activities became public. As the school's principal told a reporter at the

¹⁷ For instances of anthroposophical holocaust denial compare Haverbeck, *Rudolf Steiner: Anwalt für Deutschland*; Bondarew, *Anthroposophie auf der Kreuzung der okkult-politischen Bewegungen der Gegenwart*; and Bernhard Schaub, *Adler und Rose: Wesen und Schicksal Mitteleuropas* (Brugg: Konradin, 1992; second edition Dresden: Zeitenwende, 1999). Similar claims have been put forward by German anthroposophist Ernst Otto Cohrs, Swiss anthroposophist Willy Lochmann, Belgian anthroposophist Jos Verhulst, and British anthroposophist Nicholas Kollerstrom. Repeatedly expressed "doubts" about the holocaust by anthroposophist authors, often in conjunction with various antisemitic conspiracy theories, can be seen as an example of "deflective negationism"; cf. Florin Lobont, "Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial in Post-Communist Eastern Europe" in Dan Stone, ed., *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 440-68, and Michael Shafir, "Denying the Holocaust where it Happened" in Ronit Lentin, ed., *Re-Presenting the Shoah for the twenty-first Century* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2004), 195-226. In 2000 *Die Christengemeinschaft* published several articles by prolific far-right author and holocaust denier Gustav Sichelschmidt, a prominent fixture in hard-line German nationalist circles; Sichelschmidt also published a number of articles in *Die Drei* in the 1960s and 1970s. For context on Sichelschmidt see Jay Rosellini, *Literary Skinheads? Writing from the Right in Reunified Germany* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2000), 149-57 and 249. Other anthroposophists have sharply criticized holocaust denial in anthroposophical ranks; see e.g. Ralf Sonnenberg, "Holocaust-Leugnung und der Umgang mit der deutschen Geschichte" *Jahrbuch für anthroposophische Kritik* 1999, 158-85.

¹⁸ Andreas Molau, *Alfred Rosenberg: Der Ideologe des Nationalsozialismus* (Koblenz: Verlag Siegfried Bublies, 1993). For a similarly positive view of Rosenberg see Andreas Ferch, "Die Welt-Anschauung Alfred Rosenbergs: Nationalsozialismus als religiöser Gestaltungsimpuls des 'positiven Christentums'" in Ferch, Schaub, and Fernbach, *Ausbruch aus den Ideologien*, 5-21. Ferch, a protégé of Haverbeck, also published a piece promoting Steiner's work in *Junge Freiheit* in 1995.

time: “This is a catastrophe for our image.”¹⁹ Molau’s Waldorf colleagues claimed to have been completely unaware of his political involvements; fellow teachers said they had viewed him as “left-liberal” and “a likable oddball” and were unanimously surprised to learn of his far-right political activities.

Even after being fired from the Braunschweig Waldorf school and the ensuing public scandal, Molau re-affirmed his ongoing esteem for Steiner and his unchanged commitment to Waldorf pedagogy, while serving as speaker for education policy on the NPD executive council. His election materials in subsequent campaigns as an NPD politician highlighted his experience as a Waldorf teacher. In 2005, as an NPD candidate, Molau was invited to speak at a Waldorf school in Berlin, where he quoted from Steiner’s book on the *Mission of the Folk Souls* and declared that Waldorf pupils are “the ideal target audience for the NPD, because of Waldorf schools’ natural feeling for living authority and their cultivated inner connection with German culture.”²⁰ In 2007 Molau announced plans to open a Waldorf educational center under NPD auspices, but was threatened with legal action for trademark infringement by the Association of Waldorf Schools. In 2009 he resigned from the NPD and joined a rival far-right party, the *Deutsche Volksunion*. Molau is not the only right-wing extremist to

¹⁹ Andreas Speit, “Hätten wir seine Gesinnung erkennen können?” *die tageszeitung* October 1, 2005, 12; cf. Jochen Leffers, “Ex-Waldorflehrer arbeitet künftig für die NPD” *Spiegel-Online* October 29, 2004, and ksc, “NPD statt Schule” *die tageszeitung* October 29, 2004, 22. For background see the extensive references to Molau in Helmut Kellershohn, ed., *Das Plagiat: Der völkische Nationalismus der “Jungen Freiheit”* (Duisburg: Duisburger Institut für Sprach- und Sozialforschung, 1994), 51-52, 89-94, 153-67, 174-78, and Mecklenburg, ed., *Handbuch deutscher Rechtsextremismus*, 198-200, 267, 328-29, 414-16, 421-23, 429-30, 437. The latter work, published the year Molau began teaching at the Braunschweig Waldorf school, noted that “Molau gilt als einer der entscheidenden Nachwuchskräfte des deutschen Rechtsextremismus.” (494)

²⁰ Molau quoted in Stella Palau, “Waldorfschule lädt NPD ein,” NPD press release dated September 2, 2005, www.npd.de, accessed September 17, 2005. See also the interview with Molau in the *National-Zeitung*, November 26, 2004, accompanied by an outspokenly positive sidebar about Steiner; Molau emphasized the conceptual affinities between anthroposophy and the contemporary German far right while touting the virtues of Waldorf education, and noted the support he had received from like-minded associates within the Waldorf movement. For further context see Astrid Geisler, “Propagandalektion für Waldorfschüler” *die tageszeitung* September 8, 2005, 21.

be expelled from an anthroposophical organization when his political affiliations became known.²¹

The Molau affair, while not representative of the current anthroposophical movement as a whole, reveals a significant pattern of political misrecognition giving way to a belated reaction of disassociation. A similar dynamic, compounded by historical inexperience, appeared in the case of Friedrich Benesch (1907-1991), an outstanding figure in post-war anthroposophy and a principal leader of the Christian Community. After working as a Protestant pastor in the 1930s and 1940s, Benesch was ordained as a Christian Community priest in 1947, then headed the Christian Community seminary in Stuttgart for three decades, beginning in 1956, and trained most of the movement's clergy. Unbeknownst to his colleagues, Benesch had been an ardent Nazi from the late 1920s until the fall of the Third Reich. His unacknowledged past caused astonishment and consternation when it was finally brought to the attention of the Christian Community leadership by a non-anthroposophist historian in 2004.²² But Benesch's background had been a matter of historical record for

²¹ In 2002 Hans Krattiger, an important figure in the Swiss biodynamic movement, was expelled from the Anthroposophical Society when his position as treasurer of the far-right *Partei National Orientierter Schweizer* became public. Krattiger's colleague Bernhard Schaub was fired from his job as teacher at a Swiss Waldorf school in 1993 after publishing his book *Adler and Rose*, a classic holocaust denial text. Schaub continues to combine anthroposophical teachings with neo-Nazi doctrines; see his paean to Steiner and Rosenberg: Bernhard Schaub, "Der Gral als europäisches Zentralsymbol" in Ferch, Schaub, and Fernbach, *Ausbruch aus den Ideologien*, 51-60.

²² See Johann Böhm, "Friedrich Benesch: Naturwissenschaftler, Anthropologe, Theologe und Politiker" *Halbjahresschrift für südosteuropäische Geschichte, Literatur und Politik* 16 (2004), 108-19. Böhm, a specialist on the history of the German communities in Romania, Benesch's homeland, also happened to be one of Benesch's

pupils in the Romanian-German high school where Benesch taught in the early 1940s. In addition to thorough historical detail on Benesch's activities in the Nazi movement among Romanian Germans, Böhm's article provides personal testimony about Benesch's school classes. According to Böhm, Benesch placed racial theory at the center of his teaching, unlike the other teachers, and emphatically propagated National Socialism to the pupils. For further information see Johann Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien 1932-1944* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2008), 75-76, 101-02, 151, 208, and the chapter on Benesch in Böhm, *Hitlers Vasallen der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien vor und nach 1945* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2006), 128-41; cf. also Klaus Popa, ed., *Akten um die deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien 1937-1945* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2005), 52-53, 118.

decades.²³ In his 1941 dissertation Benesch wrote: “Since 1928 I have been a member of the National Socialist movement for renewal among the Germans in Romania.”²⁴ Benesch’s father in law and doctoral advisor was the well-known Nazi academic Hans Hahne. Christian Community publications openly discussed Benesch’s early involvement in the *völkisch* youth movement.²⁵ Significantly, Benesch did not ‘convert’ from National Socialism to anthroposophy after the war; he was already engaged with Steiner’s teachings before and during his Nazi period.²⁶ Yet the facts about his Nazi activities remained unknown among anthroposophists until thirteen years after his death. The shocked responses from his fellow anthroposophists indicate the movement’s ongoing difficulties in coming to terms with the Nazi past.

If the Molau and Benesch cases compelled anthroposophists to grapple with Nazism as a historical and contemporary phenomenon, the figure of Franz Lippert poses more challenging questions. Lippert was the anthroposophist SS officer who oversaw the biodynamic plantation at Dachau from 1941 to 1945. His activities at

²³ Cf. the extensive references to Benesch in Johann Böhm, *Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien 1936-1944* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1985), 41-42, 53, 138-39, and Böhm, *Die Deutschen in Rumänien und das Dritte Reich 1933-1940* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1999), 149, 272-73; cf. Viktor Glondys, *Tagebuch: Aufzeichnungen von 1933 bis 1949* (Dinklage: AGK, 1997), 129, 221, 237-38.

²⁴ Friedrich Benesch, “Lebenslauf” in Benesch, *Die Festung Hutberg: Eine jungnordische Mischsiedlung* (Inaugural-Dissertation, Universität Halle, 1941), 53; I consulted the copy in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin. From 1934 to 1945 Benesch was a primary leader of the extremist wing of the regional Romanian-German Nazi party. He joined the SS in 1939, and applied to work with the *Ahnenerbe* on a project about “trees and forests in Aryan-Germanic spiritual and cultural history.” In 1941 he was appointed head of the Nazi party organization in his home county in Romania. His *Ahnenerbe* file is in BA DS/G113: 457-492.

²⁵ Hans-Werner Schroeder, “Friedrich Benesch – ein Lebensbild” in Friedrich Benesch, *Leben mit der Erde* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1993), 305-15, mentions Benesch’s *völkisch* past, including his relationship with Hahne and his fondness for the ‘Nordic-Germanic’ theories of Herman Wirth, and notes that Benesch belonged to the *Artamanen*, the “blood and soil” group that produced several later Nazi leaders, including Himmler, Darré, and Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höß.

²⁶ One of the first Steiner texts that Benesch encountered was *Mission of the Folk Souls*, which he read in 1926. His lively interest in anthroposophy continued through the 1930s and 1940s. Cf. Joachim von KönigsLöw, “Friedrich Benesch – ein Jahrhundertsschicksal” *Die Drei* December 2007, 30-38. As early as September 1936 Benesch circulated a text on “Die anthroposophische Möglichkeit, Christ zu sein”; see Glondys, *Tagebuch*, 221. After 1945, Benesch portrayed himself as having been an anthroposophist throughout his adult life. For a recent apologetic anthroposophist biography see Hans-Werner Schroeder, *Friedrich Benesch: Leben und Werk 1907-1991* (Stuttgart: Mayer, 2007).

Dachau led to post-war de-Nazification hearings before a civilian panel, which ended in acquittal in 1948. Anthroposophists emphasize Lippert's benign treatment of the concentration camp inmates, attested to in a series of affidavits from former prisoner submitted during his post-war hearings. According to this version of events, Lippert appears as a brave protector of the inmates forced to work on the Dachau plantation.²⁷ For many anthroposophists, the testimony from former prisoners, and Lippert's exoneration by a de-Nazification panel, show that far from a willing collaborator with the SS's biodynamic program, Lippert was virtually a hero for his service at Dachau.

From a historical perspective, there are several reasons to question this interpretation. The post-war affidavits themselves are not necessarily suspect as sources, despite their function as exculpatory testimony for the defendant in the court case against Lippert.²⁸ They are not substitutes, however, for direct sources from Lippert's tenure as an SS officer.²⁹ Placing retrospective prisoner testimony into context is, moreover, a complex matter, particularly in light of the differential treatment of varying classes of inmates at Dachau.³⁰ For some prisoners the

²⁷ See Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 330-34, including extensive excerpts from the affidavits and other materials provided by Lippert's daughter. The excerpts are unambiguous and praise Lippert for extraordinary efforts on behalf of the prisoners.

²⁸ The content of the ten affidavits is confirmed by Seidl, "*Zwischen Himmel und Hölle*", 156-61, who generally follows Werner's interpretation. Werner, "Anthroposophen im Umgang mit Wirkungsweisen des NS-Regimes," 1070, refers to thirteen statements from former prisoners, several of them evidently personal letters to Lippert.

²⁹ See chapter 3 above for a brief reconstruction of Lippert's Dachau career on the basis of archival documents, including Lippert's SS file. According to the memoirs of Weleda director Fritz Götte, Lippert unequivocally defended the Nazi regime in 1940; cf. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 285.

³⁰ The affidavits for Lippert appear to stem largely from German clergy, who were generally subjected to less severe treatment at Dachau. According to memoirs from former inmates, most of the clergy forced to work on the plantation were Polish priests who were treated more harshly than German clergy. See e.g. Otto Pies, *Stephanus Heute* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1951), 127, recounting the hundreds of clergy who "worked, suffered, and died" on the "fields of the notorious plantation." Hans Carls, *Dachau: Erinnerungen eines katholischen Geistlichen aus der Zeit seiner Gefangenschaft 1941-1945* (Cologne: Bachem, 1946), 120, reports: "In Dachau the clergy were assigned to one of the hardest commandos, the plantation. Most of those who died in 1942/43 perished from the work methods that were required there." Jean Bernard, *Pfarrerblock Dachau: Ein Bericht* (Munich: Berchmans, 1984), 89-90, refers to the plantation as a "murder-pit" and "the terror of all the inmates." For a harrowing first-

plantation was a relatively preferred work detail, while for others it was hellish, with dangerous and often deadly working conditions.³¹ Without impugning the factual reliability of the affidavits in defense of Lippert, the account constructed around them is open to fundamental challenge. The portrait of Lippert as a humanitarian helper to his prisoners is the product of the post-war de-Nazification proceedings which exonerated him. This portrait belongs to a broader narrative of ‘rescuers’ and ‘good Nazis’ that was a common construct after 1945, which subsequent studies have sometimes adopted uncritically and projected back onto the Nazi era itself.

Accounts such as these have not withstood scholarly scrutiny. Karin Orth’s study of SS concentration camp personnel analyzes “the nimbus of the ‘decent’ and ‘correct’ SS officer, which was sworn to in numerous court statements,” and concludes that this image was frequently deceptive.³² Harold Marcuse’s study of Dachau amply supports this conclusion. Through a critical analysis of the civilian de-Nazification panels that absolved Lippert and many other SS officers, Marcuse shows that they were frequently re-cast as “rescuers” after the war, regardless of their activities in the camps.³³ The cases brought before German de-Nazification panels,

hand account of work on the plantation see Edgar Kupfer-Koberwitz, *Die Mächtigen und die Hilflosen: als Häftling in Dachau* (Stuttgart: Vorwerk, 1957), 105-08.

³¹ Reimund Schnabel, *Die Frommen in der Hölle: Geistliche in Dachau* (Frankfurt: Röderberg, 1966), 140-42, provides a detailed examination of labor battalions assigned to the plantation. In light of conflicting testimony from former prisoners, Schnabel concludes that “both the descriptions of extremely cruel working conditions and the reports of relatively comfortable activity are correct.” (141) Paul Berben, *Dachau 1933-1945: The Official History* (London: Norfolk, 1975) describes the plantation as a place “where so many thousands of prisoners labored in all weathers, and where a great many of them were shot or drowned in the ditches” (87).

³² Karin Orth, “The Concentration Camp SS as a Functional Elite” in Ulrich Herbert, ed., *National Socialist Extermination Policies* (New York: Berghahn, 2000), 306-36, quote on 328. Orth’s study examines the post-war trials of mid-level SS officers from various concentration camps, particularly those in Germany proper, rather than the extermination camps in the East. She explains that some former inmates “believed that a subjective sense of justice demanded they testify that the indicted commander [...] was relatively ‘decent’ and ‘correct’ in his treatment of them and in comparison with their respective predecessors” (328).

³³ Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The uses and abuses of a concentration camp, 1933-2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 89-94 and 104-5. Marcuse’s chapter 3, “Good Nazis,” is particularly pertinent.

consisting of lay jurors, routinely invoked the notion that SS officers who had treated prisoners benignly were thereby less guilty, and defendants were often acquitted on this basis. Marcuse notes that “most of them were let off without so much as a verbal reprimand.”³⁴ By 1948, when Lippert’s case was closed, the civilian panels were indiscriminately granting blanket clemency to SS officers and concentration camp guards across the board.³⁵ These findings are confirmed by extensive research on the de-Nazification process.³⁶

The post-war rehabilitation of Dachau guards and SS staff, and of concentration camp personnel and Nazi functionaries more generally, as well as the notoriously lenient approach of the civilian juries and the structural limitations of de-Nazification procedures, formed the framework within which anthroposophist

³⁴ Ibid., 93. Orth concurs that in the post-war trials of SS officers from regular concentration camps, “only a fraction concluded with an official conviction.” (Orth, “The Concentration Camp SS as a Functional Elite,” 329)

³⁵ Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, 94: “by late 1947 the denazification program was no longer taken seriously [...] the chambers began rubber-stamping the remaining cases, releasing thousands of the heavily suspect internees without hearings in early spring 1948.” Marcuse characterizes this as “the wholesale release of heavily compromised Nazi activists.” Lippert’s case was assigned to a *Spruchkammer* in the Bavarian town of Rosenheim; the charges against him were dropped in September 1948.

³⁶ Compare Lutz Niethammer, *Entnazifizierung in Bayern* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1972), particularly chapter 5, “Das Spruchkammerverfahren und die Betroffenen,” 538-652; Clemens Vollnhals, ed., *Entnazifizierung* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991), particularly the chapter “Die deutschen Spruchkammern,” 259-338; Bernd Mayer and Helmut Paulus, *Eine Stadt wird entnazifiziert: Die Gauhauptstadt Bayreuth vor der Spruchkammer* (Bayreuth: Ellwanger, 2008); Jörg Friedrich, *Die kalte Amnestie: NS-Täter in der Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1984); Paul Hoser, “Die Entnazifizierung in Bayern” in Walter Schuster and Wolfgang Weber, eds., *Entnazifizierung im regionalen Vergleich* (Linz: Archiv der Stadt Linz, 2004), 473-510; Regina Maier, *NS-Kriminalität vor Gericht: Strafverfahren vor den Landgerichten Marburg und Kassel 1945-1955* (Marburg: Hessische Historische Kommission, 2009). While Allied court procedures were considerably more rigorous than the *Spruchkammerverfahren*, the German civilian hearings that exonerated Lippert and other SS officers, even the American military trials at Dachau, focused on higher levels of responsibility, began to produce overwhelming acquittals, amnesties, and dropped cases by the late 1940s; cf. Ute Stiepani, “Die Dachauer Prozesse und ihre Bedeutung im Rahmen der alliierten Strafverfolgung von NS-Verbrechen” in Gerd Ueberschär, ed., *Der Nationalsozialismus vor Gericht* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1999), 227-39; Robert Sigel, *Im Interesse der Gerechtigkeit: Die Dachauer Kriegsverbrecherprozesse 1945–1948* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1992); Joshua Greene, *Justice at Dachau* (New York: Broadway, 2003). For further context see Kerstin Freudiger, *Die juristische Aufarbeitung von NS-Verbrechen* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2002), and Nathan Stoltzfus and Henry Friedlander, eds., *Nazi Crimes and the Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008).

representations of Lippert arose. His activities at Dachau appear in a different light when viewed against this backdrop. But the focus on his personal comportment is misplaced to begin with, and distracts attention from the more significant fact that Lippert was a central figure in integrating anthroposophical principles and biodynamic practices into the criminal enterprises of the SS and the concentration camp system. Avoidance of these broader historical factors is by no means unique to esoteric movements. The image of an anthroposophist SS officer as humanitarian hero partakes of a larger mythology that remains current among broad sectors of the German public, far beyond the anthroposophical milieu, a reminder of the unresolved legacy of the Nazi past.

That fissures routinely emerge between memory and history, between the ways a person or event is memorialized in the present and the ways that person or event appeared in the past, is a commonplace of historical scholarship. The convoluted relations between occultism and fascism raise additional questions for historiography itself. To the degree that anthroposophy serves as a case study of these relations, the questions raised suggest a more complex history than is usually recognized. One such question concerns the links between *Lebensreform* aims and the priorities of Nazism in power, and the consequences of these links for historical understanding of fascist politics. The mutual interaction of Nazi agencies and esoteric groups underscores the simultaneous operation of destructive and constructive elements within National Socialism, including Nazi plans for the conquered East, where a racial-ethnic utopia with ecological overtones was to be built, in part through the active participation of biodynamic proponents and their allies. Similar Nazi initiatives around environmentally sensitive public works, organic agriculture, habitat protection, and so forth are best understood not as mere camouflage or peculiar deviations from the destructive path of the Nazi juggernaut; they were part and parcel of the Nazi project

for remaking the landscape of Europe, ethnically as well as environmentally, and ignoring their impact will leave us with an impaired comprehension of the full dimensions of that project and its attempted implementation.

Neglecting the ‘positive’ features of Nazism is too often a way of protecting ourselves from what is most unsettling about the history of the topic. The destructive facets of Nazism need to be constantly kept in mind as the events themselves recede further, not least to counter the ever-present tendency to downplay, relativize, or rehabilitate various purportedly unexceptional or unobjectionable elements of Nazism.³⁷ Historical scholarship can nonetheless benefit from equal attention to the ways in which Nazism simultaneously pursued a work of construction, modeled on a ‘positive’ vision of the world remade according to National Socialist principles. What animated many Nazis and their sympathizers were broadly shared norms, vague and inconsistent as they may have been: norms of a Germanic Europe, of a healthy and pure racial body, of a cleansed *Volksgemeinschaft*, values embodied in Nazi thinking and practice. Far from representing an absence of values, much of the Nazi cataclysm can best be understood as a determined campaign to impose concrete values on a recalcitrant world, ostensibly for its own salvation.

This salvific and redemptive component of Nazism deserves to be highlighted more, as an effort to rectify the imbalances and false paths of modernity and institute “barbarous utopias” that would heal humankind. By re-focusing our perspective on what Nazism was for, not just against, on what Nazism supported and encouraged and not solely what it obliterated and crushed, we may achieve a better understanding of both Nazism’s initial appeal and its eventual destructiveness. A re-orientation along

³⁷ “The difficulty in coming to terms with the Nazi period and the desire to normalize it in one way or another,” writes Dominick LaCapra, “attest to the manner in which we tend to refuse to see that it was indeed a real possibility for an important part of ‘our’ civilization and thus for ‘us’ under certain conditions.” LaCapra, “History, Reading, and Critical Theory” in LaCapra, *History and Reading* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 67.

these lines can also help offset the tendency to view National Socialism as irreducibly estranged from the normal course of things, a seductive but misleading conclusion that arises frequently in discussions of the history of fascism. 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.”³⁸

Attention to both the unfamiliar aspects and the recognizable aspects of Nazism is essential to historical analysis if its excesses are not to defy our understanding.

Another historiographical question brought to the fore by the theme of occultism and fascism concerns the intertwinement of ideas and institutions. It can be difficult to believe that some of the ideas canvassed here achieved any institutional traction whatsoever, and in this sense what was possible under classical fascism does indeed appear strange today. But it is important to keep in mind that Fascist and Nazi officials were both ideologically driven and conscious of practical constraints and demands, and did not simply incorporate any tendency that struck their fancy. In the polycratic context of the Nazi and Fascist bureaucracies, competing ideas were sometimes promoted by rival factions as part of repeated and ruthless power struggles that had as much to do with institutional prerogatives as with ideological purity. While ideas often inspired and animated institutional actors, ideological disagreements were just as often an expression of institutional antagonism. Ideas, moreover, are frequently double-edged; both German and Italian anthroposophists promoted the notion of a Jewish-Masonic conspiracy, and this same myth was turned against anthroposophy itself in Germany in 1941. Similar ideas could also fare very differently in divergent contexts; German anthroposophists generally played little role in Nazi racial policy,

³⁸ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 2.

while Italian anthroposophists were directly involved in Fascist racial policy. One of the possibly surprising findings of this study is that occult race ideas had a more immediate influence on Fascism than on National Socialism.

A final and seemingly intractable question central to the encounter between occultism and fascism revolves around the contested category of modernity. The various uses and abuses of this ill-defined concept have generated enduring disagreements among historians, and the arguments assembled here will not help resolve them. But the ambiguities of modernity cannot be wished away for the sake of analytical clarity. They are a crucial part of what makes an esoteric worldview like anthroposophy simultaneously an object of study and an interlocutor; Steiner's followers see their own approach as a paradigm of enlightenment and an alternative conception of modern scientific knowledge. This is not merely a matter of a cherished self-image or of vague connections to a nebulous and all-encompassing 'modernity.' Regardless of what one makes of its claims to enlightenment, anthroposophy played an important role in the development of modern educational reform, modern organic farming, modern alternative medicine, and the modern ecological movement, in ways which help illuminate National Socialism's interest in such modern innovations, precisely in relation to anti-modern ideas and sentiments.

The history of occultism and its entwinement with fascism thus provides an occasion to re-examine the relation between enlightenment and its contrasts. Behind the controversies over the concept of modernity, in its descriptive as well as normative senses, lies a tacit debate over differing understandings of enlightenment and counter-enlightenment and conflicting ways of striving toward individual autonomy and social transformation. Esoteric practitioners aim to achieve enlightenment through an inner experience of spiritual truth, even when their work manifests in agriculture or education, core facets of earthly existence. Spiritual realities are, in turn, considered

more important than merely external conditions, which can at times lead to neglect of the surrounding social context and its contradictory exigencies. In certain circumstances, the pursuit of spiritual evolution led anthroposophists to misunderstand the world around them and mistake the political signs of the times, making them amenable to the objectives of an authoritarian state.

Throughout, they nevertheless held their esoteric framework to be incomparably superior to the superficial parameters of society and the petty claims and counter-claims of the undignified political realm. Their enlightenment was genuine, their science was true, their vision of another modernity and another reality was securely anchored in the higher worlds, in contrast to the false and demeaning world below. Their spiritual truths were unsullied by the base requirements of mundane existence. The esoteric took precedence over the exoteric, and political judgement was forsaken in favor of spiritual integrity. Due to anthroposophy's heterodox conception of science and spirituality, such notions are easily dismissed as the fanciful convictions of credulous occultists. But this complacent response fuses the standard condescension of established canons of mainstream science and religion, which have long looked askance at modern occultism, with nonchalance toward the cultural valence of unorthodox ideas in both secular and spiritual contexts. What the history of esoteric entanglement in fascist politics shows is that high-minded aspirations can be put in the service of pernicious ends when the concrete details of political context and social responsibility are not attended to, no matter how well-meaning and noble the reasons and no matter how benevolent the motives.

This analysis is at odds with narratives that stress the purportedly sinister and mysterious elements in Nazi relations with the esoteric, including conceptions of Nazism as inspired by occult forces, and of esotericists as attempting either to harness or combat Nazism through spiritual means. In the case of anthroposophy, the reality

was a mixture of more prosaic factors and had as much to do with *Lebensreform* and *völkisch* elements in anthroposophical thought and in other forms of esotericism, and with broader ideological disputes over authentic Germanness and the priority of political engagement or spiritual insight, as it did with beliefs about an epic confrontation of hidden forces or an occult struggle between light and dark or good and evil. This analysis also runs counter to interpretations that emphasize the political flexibility of esoteric movements as a benign characteristic not to be unfairly held against them through association with fascism, or that portray Nazi attitudes as simply increasingly hostile toward occult groups. In several significant ways, more or less the opposite was the case with Steiner's followers. Anthroposophists chose their own political associates, and the same traits that suggest flexibility in some contexts may indicate culpable naiveté and negligence in other contexts. Nazi officials, for their part, were implacably divided over occult endeavors, and the tendency was not consistently toward escalating hostility. Biodynamics, for example, encountered increasing positive interest among a variety of Nazi potentates in the course of the Third Reich. 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.

Anthroposophy is one constituent of the extremely heterogeneous esoteric milieu, and the events at the center of this study cannot necessarily stand in for the experience of all occultists. Yet the historical record examined here has wider implications. To the extent that Steiner's followers failed to recognize and respond to the political conditions around them in adequate ways, the history of anthroposophy in the fascist era can be seen as an instance of "the distorting and harmful effects of viewing political events through an occult prism."³⁹ In the absence of clear-eyed

³⁹ Bernice Rosenthal, "Political Implications of the Early Twentieth-Century Occult Revival" in Rosenthal, ed., *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, 379-417, quote on 392.

analysis and informed action, the virtuous aspirations that underlie esoteric worldviews are open to potential misuse, a yearning for alternative knowledge that leads to false alternatives. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany presented adherents of occult wisdom and proponents of spiritual renewal with unanticipated challenges that revealed the limits of esoteric insight: under the circumstances created by the two regimes, it was not enough to focus on their own movement, identify its aims with the spiritual wellbeing of humankind, abjure critical reflection and neglect social and cultural context, and cling to an ‘unpolitical’ ideal of enlightened authority. These failings were not, of course, unique to occultists, but they may have been encouraged by basic structures of occult thought.

Reflecting on the entanglement between occultism and fascism should not be occasion to write off the peculiarities of a previous period as an aberration, an uncharacteristic outbreak of irrationalism. These events and ideas are instead part of a “pattern of interacting rational and irrational forces,” in the words of Theodor Adorno, and serve as a reminder that “irrationality is not necessarily a force operating outside of the range of rationality.”⁴⁰ Historians, too, have recognized the emergence of fascism as an instance of the double-edged character of modernity.⁴¹ The same can be said of occultism. In view of the current popularity of anthroposophical values and practices, it would be a mistake to relegate this problematic history to the margins, safely removed from the mainstream. The temptation to hold both occultism and

⁴⁰ Theodor Adorno, “The Stars Down to Earth. The Los Angeles Times Astrology Column: A Study in Secondary Superstition” *Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* 1957, 19-88, quotes on 19. The essay, written in 1953, is available in Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and other essays on the irrational in culture* (London: Routledge, 2001), 34-127.

⁴¹ Addressing the promise and pitfalls of ‘modernity’ in light of the experience of National Socialism, Detlev Peukert wrote: “we should not analyse away the tensions between progressive and aberrant features by making a glib opposition between modernity and tradition: we should call attention to the rifts and danger-zones which result from the modern civilising process itself, so that 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 for freedom must always be resumed afresh, both in enquiry and in action.” (Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 249)

fascism at arm's length, to see them as merely eccentric and peripheral curiosities from yesteryear, is a way of avoiding straightforward engagement with the disconcerting persistence of the past within the present. Resisting this temptation, and looking squarely at these phenomena in historical perspective, can yield a more lucid understanding not just of an ill-fated earlier era but of our own time.

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Abbreviations used in archival citations:

German:

BA Bundesarchiv Berlin

BAK Bundesarchiv Koblenz

GSAPK Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz

Italian:

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

Div. Aff. gen. e ris. Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati

Pol. Pol. Polizia Politica

fasc. pers. fascicolo personale

b. busta

f. fascicolo

sf. sottofascicolo

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