GOETHEANUM COMMUNICATIONS

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**Science of effective spirit**

**Book on Rudolf Steiner‘s approaches and concerns**

**Rudolf Steiner was the originator of pioneering achievements such as Waldorf Education, biodynamic farming and Anthroposophic Medicine. His scientific approach is not as well known. In his book ‘Rudolf Steiner und die Anthroposophie’, Peter Selg describes a man with a social impulse that includes the effectiveness of spiritual forces.**

“Rudolf Steiner‘s Goetheanum was conceived as a science centre, a place of spiritual scientific research and teaching, of professional development and practice,” Peter Selg states in his book about Rudolf Steiner and anthroposophy. The author is professor of medical anthropology and ethics at Alanus University in Alfter, Germany, head of the Ita Wegman Institute in Arlesheim, Switzerland, and a member of the Goetheanum Leadership, Dornach, Switzerland.

There have always been many, also rather controversial, views of Rudolf Steiner since his lifetime. Peter Selg looks from a less common perspective at Rudolf Steiner‘s scientific impulse and his public activities after the end of World War I. The combination of natural scientific clarity and spiritual scientific inclusion of the active spirit has always met with incomprehension, if not rejection and resistance. Peter Selg lists some of the reasons for this, such as the fact that Rudolf Steiner‘s primarily oral presentations were taken down in shorthand and published unrevised by him and largely without contextualization. Peter Selg‘s perspective also exemplifies the treatment of scientific outsiders as described by Thomas S. Kuhn, Ludwig Fleck and Joseph Weizenbaum. Rudolf Steiner continued unperturbed on his path, developing with his co-workers many specialized scientific perspectives and initiatives. In addition, he introduced his idea of social threefolding as a way, as Peter Selg points out, of “overcoming the classic national state in favour of autonomous cultural, legal and economic spheres.”

Some saw this as a threat. Rudolf Steiner‘s attitude and anthroposophy were exposed to attacks from extreme right nationalists, among others. In addition to vilification in the press there were actual acts of violence: Rudolf Steiner was able to escape, with the help of friends, an attempt on his life in Munich, Germany, on 15 May 1922, and the First Goetheanum fell victim to an arson attack in the New Year‘s night 1922/1923.

Rudolf Steiner continued his work, nonetheless. He planned the Second Goetheanum, placed the Anthroposophical Society on a new foundation and built up a School of Spiritual Science with different sections or faculties. His death on 30 March 1925 prevented him from continuing his impulses himself.

(2633 characters, 399 words/SJ; English by Margot M. Saar)

**Book (in German)** Peter Selg: Rudolf Steiner und die Anthroposophie. Studien zu Leben und Werk [Rudolf Steiner and anthroposophy. Studies on his life and work] **Web (in German)** schwabe.ch/peter-selg-rudolf-steiner-und-die-anthroposophie-978-3-7965-5263-2

**Preview (in German)** Peter Selg and Harald Liehr, Schwabe publishing, 14 April 2025, 7 pm, Goetheanum **Web (in German)** Preview goetheanum.ch/de/veranstaltungen/buchpraesentation-peter-selg

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