

Excursus on Worthwhile Research Projects on Steiner's Foundations (17. Juni, 2022)

As some readers know, I already started an overview of promising research projects some years ago, but it has remained quite fragmentary so far. This is not because I could not come up with anything, but because my time budget was too tight for this. As many readers also know, there are regular references to such projects in the course of my study [*Bildende Kräfte und Rudolf Steiners Philosophie der Freiheit*](#), so that it is of course an imposition for some people to search for them among the entire content. The present research excursus is intended to remedy this somewhat. It largely corresponds to that *Exkurs*, which you will find in the work mentioned at this time (24. April 2022) on pages 1218 ff. And at the same time it bundles meaningful research projects into the present study, which as a research enterprise also correspond to my current state of knowledge in 2021. What has been said in past publications about such promising research projects on Steiner is still valid. So that you can look around there supplementary likewise and make use of it for your own work.

Let us get straight to the heart of the matter:

Rudolf Steiner's Foundations of Spiritual Research in the Context of the Scientific Problem of Causality.

In 1912, on October 31, Steiner gave a lecture on the subject: *How to Refute Spiritual Research?* ([GA-62, Dornach 1988, p. 9 ff](#)) There he stated on p. 11: "First of all, one can quite generally characterize spiritual science by saying, that spiritual science places itself on the standpoint that it must go beyond everything that man perceives through his senses, which he is able to fathom with a science that is preferably built on the senses and on the intellect, which draws its conclusions from the senses - that it must go beyond all this to the spiritual causes of those sensuous facts which can be investigated by the intellect, so that everywhere behind these sensuous facts it not only assumes but tries to prove a spiritual world, a spiritual world in which lie the causes of all that the senses can see and the intellect can investigate."

The spiritual world is creator and origin of the sensual world, according to Steiner. The aim of anthroposophy, he said, is to investigate this connection of creation and its spiritual causation with an intent to prove. - Now, in order to demonstrate such anthroposophical research intentions of Steiner, I could have almost anywhere reached into his anthroposophical work, as we have often shown in this study. What means as said: The causes to the sensually perceptible facts lie for Steiner in a not sensually, but only spiritually perceptible creative world, which is not accessible to the means of the ordinary natural science. Steiner set out to explore it spiritually-empirically already in the early 1880s. And quite explicitly. Since that time you can follow Steiner's scientific way to a «complementary natural science». For nothing else is the exploration of that «spirit-nature» in which the spiritual causes for the «sensual nature» lie.

That the relations are like this, you can read for example in Steiner's writing *Von Seelenrätseln* (GA-21) [from p. 11 ff](#) on. Where he has spoken about this in the chapter *Anthropology and Anthroposophy*, and brings this complementary relationship of anthroposophical and «anthropological» research [on p. 32 f](#) concluding in a vivid picture of the photographic negative and positive.

It is in a generalized sense about creative causality and productivity - with very special attention to the spiritual causes of the sensual world. For in the spiritual world lie the causes of the sensual. Now, none of this is surprising or new to Steiner's anthroposophy. And it is also not surprising, that Steiner made the question of the origin of thought the core question of the first chapter of his *Philosophy of Freedom*. For where should this origin of thinking lie, if not also in the spiritual world, when the latter already applies to the origin of the sensual world? However, it seems that the spiritual research of causes as such is largely unknown to those who examine Steiner's early work

for Steiner's early research motifs and find and found nothing analogous there until today, although it can be read everywhere in the early work there.

Goethe's Essay on Nature ([Translation see here](#))

As is well known, the young Steiner, as the editor of Goethe's scientific writings, initially also edited and commented Goethe's essay *Die Natur* within the framework of the Kürschner edition. (Which, by the way, most likely did not come from Goethe himself, but rather from his admirer Tobler - see on the origin of this essay Steiner 1892 [here, p. 393 f](#) and in the context of the GA-30 the same [here p. 320 ff](#). See also Wilhelm Dilthey on Steiner's discovery of Tobler's authorship [here p. 14 ff.](#)).

On [p. 6 of the Kürschner edition](#) vol. 34 of 1887 Steiner comments on that questioning passage of the essay about the creative forces of nature, that is the question about the «mother»: "Nature lives in her children only, and the mother, where is she?" To this question about the creative mother the commentator Steiner answers: "Only the creatures of nature are perceptible to the senses, not their creative power. The latter (the mother) is conveyed to us only in science, when we rise from nature as a manifold of products to her as the producer. We must advance from the given things to the forces of nature, from the effect to the active." - A task that can be confidently adopted for Steiner's later anthroposophy as well, as we saw in this digression introductory to the 1912 lecture.

We must rise from the products of nature to those productive forces which underlie the products of nature. - The creative power of nature, Steiner comments in the essay, is however of a spiritual quality. And it is a task of natural science to progress from the effect to the active. Thus, in the sense of the essay, to penetrate to those spiritually productive and creating forces which underlie the sensually accessible nature. Which lives as an acting, creative force in the creatures of nature, but which, according to the essay, cannot be found there so easily as a "mother".

This is, as you can see, the same programmatic view which Steiner then outlined in his Berlin lecture in 1912 as "spiritual causal research of spiritual science". But it is also the same view which he already in 1897 and in later editions in the writing *Goethes Weltanschauung* [Goethe's World View] in the chapter *Die Metamorphose der Welterscheinungen* [on p. 70 f](#) [*The Metamorphosis of World Phenomena*] has explained. With the words: "Man is uninvolved in the coming into being of all other views. In him the ideas of these views live up. But these ideas would not be there if there were not in him the productive power to bring them to appearance. Even if the ideas are the content of what works in the things, they come to the appearing existence by the human activity. Man can therefore only recognize the nature of the world of ideas when he looks at its activity. In every other observation, he penetrates only the active idea; the thing in which it is active remains as perception outside his mind. In the contemplation of the idea, the active and the effected is completely contained within him. He has the whole process completely present in his inside. The perception no longer appears to be produced by the idea; for the perception is now itself an idea. But this view of the self-producing is the view of freedom. In the observation of thinking, man sees through the events of the world. He does not have to search here for an idea of this happening; for this happening is the idea itself."

(Comment: The English [translation here](#) (GA-006, *Goethe's World View*, new translation by William Lindeman from *Goethe's Weltanschauung*, published by Verlag der Rudolf Steiner Nachlassverwaltung, Dornach, Switzerland, 1963) is not quite appropriate. To be clear, the translation is even completely wrong and misleading at this point. This is all the more awkward because this is one of the very most important passages from Steiner's early work. There is translated: "In observing his thinking man sees into world happening." But that means, man only «looks» into world happening. But the corresponding German sentences read ([here on page 86](#)):

„Bei der Beobachtung des Denkens **durchsicht der Mensch das Weltgeschehen** [emphasis by MM].“ This means that man has a very clear knowledge of world events, and does not only «see» them. The German expression «Durchschauen» by Steiner has a very specific epistemological sense, that is: «to look through something» in the meaning of scientific recognition and knowledge. In this case, namely the recognition and comprehension of world events and not only the seeing of world events. A person who "sees through" world events knows something very definite and clear about world events and does not just watch or see them. And there is no other possibility for any natural sciences to see through the world events in this precise and clear way like this. What in the present case has its reason in the fact that the human being in this case has the effective and the effected present in himself. What in other natural-scientific observations is never the case. This is particularly emphasized by Steiner, who points out that man has no ideas to look for in observing thought, because the happening is the idea itself. And consequently he does not have to hypothesize about world events. See also below when we deal with the problem of causality.)

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