

Plaidoyer for historical-critical Steiner research. Using the methodological example of Rudolf Steiner as a possible character in the *Mysteriendramen*.

David W. Wood

ABSTRACT: A main thesis of this paper is that one of the ways for Rudolf Steiner research to become more scientific is to proceed in accordance with a *genuine* historical and critical methodology. It attempts to show that even though some of Steiner's chief critics support this method in theory, they often fall short of a historical-critical approach in practice. Using the example of the unresolved problem of whether Steiner could be a character in his own *Mysteriendramen*, the author provides a number of methodological, historical and biographical indications for approaching this problem. He tries to demonstrate the fruitfulness of this method by addressing the question of Steiner as a drama character from the new perspective of literary pseudonyms. In conclusion, he maintains that a scholarly historical-critical approach to spiritual science was advocated by Steiner himself.

Keywords: Historical-critical Steiner research, methodological example, Mystery Dramas by Rudolf Steiner, Helmut Zander, Plato, pseudonyms, Rosicrucianism, Karl Julius Schröer

Could Rudolf Steiner be one of the characters in his own mystery dramas? This question is now even being asked by some of Steiner's harshest critics. As the scholar Helmut Zander puts it in his recent biography: "The most exciting question naturally concerns Steiner himself, the question regarding the figure he might have written for himself. Whether he is present in Johannes Thomasius, [...] or did Steiner perhaps divide himself up over several people, and is he at least also partly hidden in Benedictus, the beardless modern mystic, as Steiner once described him?" (Zander, 2011, p. 300). This question points to a major unsolved problem in Steiner research, for which there is still no scholarly consensus on two points: not only concerning which particular character Steiner might be the dramas, but even if he is a character at all. In his biography on Steiner, and in his other writings on anthroposophy, Zander is unable to provide any solution to this problem. In fact, he is only able to proceed as far as raising the question. What does this say about the current state of Steiner research when Zander – an academic expert on Steiner who has written, among others, a 1,800 page study of the history of anthroposophy in Germany, a book on Steiner's theory of reincarnation, as well as apparently *the* biography of Steiner – is not only incapable of providing an answer to this important question, but is at a loss to even know *how to begin* to answer this question?

To try and explain this impasse, one might think there something wrong with Zander's method. It is well-known that Zander follows a so-called "historical-contextual" approach, which strives to be "critical" and to return to the original "sources" (Zander, 2007, vol. 1, p. 4). I am personally of the view that a historical-critical method is absolutely the right approach for Steiner research to become more scientific, and it is one of Zander's greatest merits that he has championed these principles. Researchers not infrequently adopt the attitude that Steiner carried out his work in some kind of historical vacuum. I believe that attitude is misguided. As we shall see, it is precisely Steiner himself who insisted on the necessity of genuine historical and critical studies of his works and claims. Just like in any other field of research, it is almost always fruitful to take historical aspects into account, to retain a healthy and rigorous critical attitude, not to

mention the absolute necessity of returning to the original sources. As an influential figure at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Steiner profoundly engaged with contemporaries such as Eduard von Hartmann, Ernst Haeckel, Friedrich Theodor Vischer, Karl Julius Schröer, Edouard Schuré, Annie Besant, Franz Brentano etc. It is therefore only common sense to say that our understanding of Steiner will improve the more we know about the historical issues, contexts and personalities at the time.

The present essay does not attempt to solve the problem of whether Steiner is a character in the mystery dramas; instead, it simply presents a number of methodological indications and biographical and historical references that hopefully point the way towards a solution. (For a comprehensive attempt at a solution to this problem see the author's forthcoming volume: *The Riddle of Johannes: Rudolf Steiner's Biography and the Mystery Dramas*). Zander's inability to answer this question, or to even find a satisfactory starting point to answer it, is not because his method is historical and critical, but because in certain instances it is *not historical or critical enough*. Simply put: with regard to the problem of Steiner's biographical relationship to the mystery dramas Zander fails to adhere to his own research principles. He does not sufficiently return to and examine the original sources, and he allows subjective preconceptions to cloud his judgment. It is little wonder that he is then unable to arrive at a solution to a question that he himself has posed. Let us take a concrete example of this.

The Year 1889

To solve the riddle of these dramas and their relation to his biography Steiner gave a precise historical indication. He said that the seeds of the first mystery drama could be traced back to the year 1889, a period when Steiner was a Goethe scholar based in Vienna. "If I may hint at this, there is a long spiritual process that led to this mystery [drama]. When I think about it or survey it, the seeds of this drama reach back, as it were, to the year 1889." (Steiner, 1992, p. 124). This specific indication from Steiner seems like the perfect point of departure for a historical-critical and contextual investigation. However, what is Zander's response to this indication? He merely makes the judgment: "diese Aussage ist in ihrer Vagheit wohl mehr falsch als richtig" (this statement is, in its vagueness, surely more wrong than right) (Zander, 2007, vol. 2, p. 1028). Why is Steiner's indication vague and wrong? The reader is not given any genuine evidence or reason. Instead, to justify his rejection of this indication concerning the year 1889 Zander simply, and completely illogically, refers to *later* events in Steiner's Berlin period (from 1897 onward), when Steiner was the editor of the *Magazine für Literatur* (Zander, 2007, vol. 2, p. 1028, footnote 73). One has rightly criticized Steiner research in the past for blindly believing Steiner's words without critically examining them. However, here we have the opposite tendency: blindly *disbelieving* Steiner's indications without critically investigating them. Both extremes should be rejected in Steiner research, because both are *uncritical and unscientific*.

Is Steiner's 1889 indication really vague and incorrect? What happened in this year that could have a relation to the genesis of the mystery dramas – i.e. to some of Steiner's most important artistic creations? A look at the *Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe* (Collected Works) quickly reveals the following: The year 1889 saw the publication of Steiner's principal theoretical text on art, *Goethe als Vater einer neuen Ästhetik* (Steiner, 1889), and it was also the year in which the 28-year old began his substantial corpus of theatre reviews in Vienna (Steiner, 2004b, pp. 23ff.). Moreover, in the summer of 1889 Steiner made his first trip to Germany (Steiner, 1985a, pp. 201-206). He writes in his autobiography that one of the main results of this voyage was that he managed to visit some of the leading art galleries and it considerably deepened his artistic conceptions: "My first journey to Germany occurred at this time (1889). [...] And hence this first large journey that I could make was also of enormous significance for my views on art" (Steiner, 2000a, pp. 150, 156). Documentation of Steiner's preoccupation with artistic questions during this 1889 trip can be found in his letters. For example, in a September 1889 letter to the writer Friedrich Lemmermayer Steiner recounts his opinions on the artistic merits of the Goethe and Schiller sculptural monuments he had seen in both Weimar and Berlin: "The double monument [of Goethe and Schiller in Weimar] made an overwhelming impression on me. Every aspect of Goethe's countenance really bears a powerful spirit within it, and I had the greatest admiration for the artist to whom we owe this work. And one surely has to place among the

most magnificent creations of this kind Schaper's Goethe [statue] in Berlin" (Steiner, 1985a, p. 208). From his letters dated 9th August and 1st September 1889 we see Steiner had visited the Wartburg castle and that it had made a profound spiritual impression on him. (Steiner, 1985a, pp. 204, 208). The Wartburg castle was of course the scene of the famous *Sängerkrieg* or "Battle of the Minstrels", which pitted the poet Wolfram von Eschenbach against Heinrich von Ofterdingen. – In a karma lecture of 18 September 1924 Steiner brought this *Sängerkrieg* at the Wartburg and Heinrich von Ofterdingen directly into connection with the mystery drama character of Dr. Strader, a character based on the German philosopher Gideon Spicker: "And in Heinrich von Ofterdingen I found again the individuality who had formed the archetype of Strader." (Steiner, 1991, p. 115). – In other words, even the briefest examination of the *Gesamtausgabe* reveals that Steiner's indication to look closer at the year 1889 for the "seeds" to the mystery dramas is not vague or incorrect at all, but perfectly clear and comprehensible.

Moreover, as our two earlier essays on the mystery dramas showed, 1889 also seems to be exactly the year when Steiner met Reinhold Köhler in Weimar and Josef Franz Capesius in the Siebenbürgen city of Hermannstadt – the two personalities whom we believe formed the real-life models for the central characters of Frau Balde and Professor Capesius. (Cf. Wood 2010/2011, 2011/2012). Probing a little deeper into Steiner's letters, lectures and writings, we see that the funeral of the Austrian poet-philosopher Robert Hamerling took place in Graz in July 1889, which Steiner attended (Steiner, 1985b, p. 28); in addition, Steiner had meetings in Berlin with the philosopher Eduard von Hartmann (Steiner 1984b, p. 307) and the writer and art historian Herman Grimm (Steiner, 1985a, p. 209); and finally, this year was when Steiner encountered the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche for the first time (Steiner, 2000a, p. 250). Could any, or perhaps even all of these events and experiences of 1889, have played a role in the genesis of the mystery dramas? The only way to answer this question is to return to the original sources and carry out a thorough and impartial investigation. – One that is not merely historical and critical in name and in theory, but one that is historical and critical in application and *in practice*.

However, instead of critically examining Steiner's writings and the events in his life from this year Zander simply rejects this historical indication without properly investigating it. Steiner's early writings on art, theatre and aesthetics are all left unexamined, the experiences with Hartmann, the art historian Herman Grimm, and the writings and destiny of Nietzsche are not considered in relation to the dramas, while the 1889 trips to Weimar, Berlin, the Wartburg castle and Hermannstadt are not followed up. This is a pity, because by pointing out the parallels between the destinies of the philosophers Jakob Frohschammer and Gideon Spicker (Zander, 2007, p. 1039), or the possibility of the Vienna writer Victor Capesius (Zander, 2007, p. 1038, footnote 108) being a model for Professor Capesius, Zander seemed to be on more fruitful research paths. This is for the simple reason that he had at least seriously considered Steiner's proposition that all the characters in the dramas were based on real-life people. Instead of pursuing these paths further, Zander allows his intellectual preconceptions and a distrust of the materials to dictate the direction of his research, believing that the mystery dramas must somehow have their genesis in Steiner's later Berlin period and contemporary theatre traditions such as those of Max Reinhardt or Maurice Maeterlinck (Zander, 2007 pp. 1047-1059; Zander, 2011, pp. 190-191). As a result, he moves further away from the original sources and is unable to find any solid starting point for the above question as to whether Steiner is a character in the mystery dramas.

Posing Questions from New Standpoints

For Steiner, one of the hallmarks of a good researcher is not just the ability to pose questions, but of making serious efforts to answer them. And if the answer is not insightful, or if the solution is not satisfying, then perhaps the problem lies in the nature of the question itself: i.e., the question might be wrongly posed – an issue already alluded to in his 1892 book *Wahrheit und Wissenschaft*. For Steiner, many solutions to scientific problems had not been discovered earlier because the problems had not been correctly formulated: "However, if the questions in a science are erroneously posed, then one has to surely doubt in advance the correctness of the solutions. [...] In short, the success of scientific undertakings crucially depends on whether

one is able to correctly formulate the problems.” (Steiner, 1892, p. 6). How can one learn to pose fruitful questions in research? In Steiner’s opinion, one method is to try and view a subject from fresh standpoints and then to pose questions in accordance with this new vantage point. Entirely different language and terminology might be required to capture the resulting answers, but that is only natural and appropriate for a new perspective. (For more details on these methods of Steiner, see Wood, 2012 & 2013). In his *Romantic Encyclopaedia* Novalis proposes a similar methodology for solving research problems: “All good researchers – physicians, observers and thinkers proceed like Copernicus. – They turn the data and methods around, to see whether or not they fit better this way.” (Novalis, 2007, p. 92).

In addition, one has to be open-minded and not subjectively exclude other possibilities. For example, in Steiner research it appears that many researchers start from the assumption that there is a break in Steiner’s worldview around 1900, with his later spiritual works often viewed at odds with his earlier philosophical and literary ones. In contrast, Steiner himself always made the opposite claim – that there is no rupture in his worldview and that all his works are interrelated. However, in order to be scientific and objective, neither assumption should be made at the beginning of an investigation. That is to say, initially one should neither assume rupture nor continuity in Steiner’s works but both options should be left open, because to do anything else would be to approach them with an intellectual prejudice and preconception. Our approach will follow this methodology of examining the arguments within his different works, both before and after 1900, to especially consider the question of *consistency*. Only after the research is completed will a judgment be made about possible interrelatedness or rupture in Steiner’s views.

Could these techniques of posing questions from different standpoints, and of not approaching the topic with preconceptions, work for the problem of whether Steiner is a character in the mystery dramas? It might, but as just mentioned, to be objective one would also have to leave open a further possibility – that Steiner is *not* a character in the dramas. For all the characters could be based on other people.

Character Name as a Pseudonym?

Instead of simply asking: “What character could Steiner be in the dramas?” – a question that has been unfruitful for over one hundred years now, one could try to approach the problem from a new standpoint. One could reformulate the question in the following way: What would it mean for Steiner to have portrayed himself as a character in the dramas? It would mean that he had chosen to depict elements of his biography behind another name, one that is not his own. That is, Steiner would have employed a technique similar to that of a literary pseudonym. Of course, a character name in a drama is not exactly the same as a pseudonym, for the latter is usually used to designate the nom de plume of an author. Nevertheless, by choosing a character name that is not identical to his real name, it would be similar in the sense of *hiding his identity* behind a literary creation. The opening question could now be rephrased as follows: has Steiner ever previously used a pseudonym? If so, in which context and for what reason?

Before answering these questions, it is worth remarking that the decision to use a pseudonym is not unusual, especially within the tradition of spiritual science. Steiner places his mystery plays in the Rosicrucian tradition by subtitling the first drama “*Ein Rosenkreuzermysterium*” (A Rosicrucian Mystery). One should recall that the name of the founder of this spiritual movement – Christian Rosenkreutz – is likewise a pseudonym, as Steiner himself pointed out in a public lecture: “What arises as a certain fundamental mood from the different communications, can be summarized by saying that Christian Rosenkreutz – that is to be sure not his true name, but is in fact the name under which he has become known – [...]” (Steiner, 1983b, p. 176). Moreover, the above-mentioned name of ‘Novalis’ is also a well-known pseudonym, it is the pen name of the poet-philosopher Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772-1801). It is not irrelevant to mention the example of Hardenberg/Novalis in connection with the mystery dramas, because as part of the stage setting for the third drama of 1912, *Der Hüter der Schwelle* (The Guardian of the Threshold), Steiner had a painting of Novalis hang alongside the portraits of Elijah, John the Baptist and Raphael. (Steiner, 1986, p. 147). It was a striking visual reminder that the new dramas of Steiner not only concerned initiation but were also artistic presentations of the fact of reincarnation. As Steiner had already remarked a year before with

respect to the second mystery drama: “*Die Prüfung der Seele* (The Soul’s Probation) is especially an attempt to present the idea of reincarnation in its workings within the soul-life of the human being in a realistic manner.” (Steiner, 1989, p. 192).

With regard to Steiner’s own oeuvre, we can now ask: in all his works, taking into account both his earlier and later writings, did Steiner ever use a literary pseudonym to conceal his identity? As soon as we adopt this new standpoint, and pose the question in these terms, we immediately see that it becomes more fruitful. For Steiner appears to have used pseudonyms two times in his life to conceal his identity, and as we shall see, both are related to the mystery dramas. The first time was in a review from 1884, and the second time in a 1904 essay.

Steiner’s Review of K. J. Schröer’s *Goethe and Love*

The first text from 1884 is a small review that appeared in the newspaper *Deutsche Zeitung* in Vienna on the 24th December 1884. – It is one of the earliest texts ever published by Steiner. The full title of his review is: “Goethe und die Liebe und Goethes Dramen. Von A.Z.” (Steiner, 2004b, pp. 133-138). As one can see, here the twenty-three year old Steiner did not sign his own name, but used the pseudonym “Von A.Z.” (From A.Z.). His text is a review of a number of Karl Julius Schröer’s writings, including the small book *Goethe and Love* (*Goethe und die Liebe*) and the first two volumes of Schröer’s edition of Goethe’s dramas for the Kürschner edition. Here we are directed to the work of both Karl Julius Schröer and Goethe, and specifically to the field of drama. One might imagine that there is nothing unusual about Steiner employing a pseudonym here, and that it happens to deal with drama is merely a coincidence. For after all, Steiner was a student of Schröer, and perhaps did not want to appear biased in a review of his teacher’s work. That could be the case. Yet why did Steiner choose the apparently banal pseudonym “Von A.Z.”? What is perhaps banal to us would have been immediately understood by Karl Julius Schröer, and even deeply appreciated. Why? Because A.Z. was one of the most important pseudonyms of his father Tobias Gottfried Schröer. With the father Schröer we encounter the phenomenon of pseudonyms in terms of a tragic destiny. As an author T. G. Schröer had to publish nearly all his works under different literary names. Many of his writings became famous, but T.G. Schröer himself “only remained unknown, because he could not use his own name on account of the prevailing censorship situation.” (Steiner, 1984a, p. 92). This fact is already mentioned by the young Steiner in his very first extant letter of January 13, 1881. He firstly describes how thankful he is to his destiny for meeting Karl Julius Schröer, then explains to his correspondent how Tobias Gottfried’s main pseudonym of Chr. Oeser is an anagram of the name ‘Schröer’. The real significance of the name can be understood by rearranging the letters:

I thank God and a favourable destiny that I have become acquainted with a man here in Vienna, who – after Goethe of course – may claim to be the best Faust expert there is; a man I highly value and esteem as a teacher, scholar, poet, and human being. His name is Karl Julius Schröer, the son of Chr. Öser [...] Take the name – it is a pseudonym – Chr. Öser, and place the S before the Ö – put it right at the start – and you end up with SCHröer. (Steiner, 1985a, p. 15).

In addition to the many works published under the name of Chr. Oeser, Tobias Gottfried published one important work under the pseudonym ‘A.Z.’ – it was none other than his chief dramatic work: *Leben und Thaten Emerich Tököly’s und seiner Streitgenossen. Ein historisches Drama von A.Z.* (The Life and Deeds of Emerich Tököly and his Disputing Parties. A Historical Drama from A.Z.; T.G. Schröer, 1839). The significance of the signature “A.Z.” is explained by Steiner in a 1915 public lecture in Berlin: “Christian Oeser – indeed, who is Christian Oeser? Christian Oeser is the same man who published for example a drama in Pressburg in 1839 – and no one had any idea who the author was – *Leben und Taten des Emerich Tököly*, ‘from A. Z.’; that is to say, from A to Z, so that you have all the letters of the alphabet between A and Z.” (Steiner, 2000b, p. 126). Thus, Steiner himself understood the pseudonym A.Z. to refer to the entire alphabet.

One might imagine that in his review Steiner chose this same pseudonym for purely sentimental reasons, i.e. as some kind of homage to Chr. Oeser. However, an examination of the books mentioned in the 1884 review, especially Karl Julius Schröer’s *Goethe and Love*, points in an altogether different direction. For Schröer’s book also deals with the question of pseudonyms, or more precisely: the act of hiding one’s real

identity in a text *behind that of a poetic character name*. In the second part of *Goethe and Love* entitled “Goethe and Marianne Willemer”, Schröer presents the mystery of the authorship of certain poems in Goethe’s *West-Eastern Divan* (1819). The writer Herman Grimm was eventually able to demonstrate in 1869 that a number of the poems in the *Divan* had actually been written by Goethe’s friend Marianne Willemer, whose identity in the text had been hidden behind the character name of “Suleika”. However, scholars had also been puzzled why the first and third lines in the following stanza from the poem “Hatem” did not rhyme:

Du beschämst wie Morgenröte
 Jener Gipfel ernste Wand,
 Und noch einmal fühlet Hatem
 Frühlingshauch und Sommerbrand.

(You put to shame, like the morning dawn
 That earnest cliff and peak,
 And once again feels Hatem
 The breath of spring and summer heat.)

(Goethe, 1989, p. 74)

It was the discovery of the Goethe scholar Karl Simrock to have shown that if one replaces the name of the poet Hatem with that of the poet Goethe, we finally get a rhyming solution to the mystery of the poem: for *Goethe* rhymes with *Morgenröte* (morning dawn). (K. J. Schröer, 1884, pp. 31-33; cf. K. J. Schröer, 2000, pp. 57-61.) Apart from its rhyming quality, is there perhaps another reason why Goethe chose the word ‘Morgenröte’ in this passage of the poem? *Morgenröte im Aufgang* or *Aurora* is of course the title of Jacob Böhme’s most well-known work. For Steiner, the title of Böhme’s book is a spiritual-scientific reference to the birth of one’s higher self. (Steiner, 1983a, pp. 501-502). – “Morgenröte” is none other than a designation for initiation, and it is a term Goethe additionally uses in a number of key passages in the *Faust* poem. (Goethe, 1907, p. 40; cf. Steiner, 1979, p. 24). Thus, just as Steiner used a pseudonym for his review of *Goethe and Love*, K.J. Schröer’s book shows that Goethe too had hidden his identity behind that of the pseudonym or character name “Hatem”, which in turn is related to the process of death and rebirth in initiation. It is exactly in the *Divan* that Goethe portrays this experience in some of his most famous lines:

Und so lang du das nicht hast,
 Dieses: Stirb und werde!
 Bist du nur ein trüber Gast,
 Auf der dunklen Erde.

(And as long as you do not have
 This: dying and becoming!
 You are but a gloomy guest
 Upon this dark earth roaming.)

(Goethe, 1989, p. 19)

Aristotle and Mystery Drama

The second example of Rudolf Steiner’s use of a pseudonym is in an essay from the year 1904. What is the topic of this essay? – It is entitled: “Aristoteles über das Mysteriendrama” (Aristotle on Mystery Drama;

Steiner, 1987, pp. 150-157), Steiner's only detailed written piece on the topic of mystery drama, from the perspective of the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Initially he did not sign this text with his customary signature of "Dr. R. Steiner", but used the pseudonym "Dr. K. Tinter". Steiner subsequently used his own name in later reprints of this text. Helmut Zander also notes Steiner's use of this pseudonym, but does not investigate its significance. (Zander, 2007, p. 1046, footnote 171). This essay outlines the origins of mystery drama in Western culture, particularly with regard to the Dionysian mysteries of ancient Greece. From this essay alone one should see the historical necessity in Steiner research of not only examining nineteenth and twentieth century models of drama, but the nature of drama in ancient Greece. (Christian Clement also sees the necessity of treating this topic. See Clement, 2007, pp. 131-138). One of the most striking elements of Steiner's 1904 essay is his emphasis on the relationship between *the mystery dramas and biography*. Mystery drama is not just to be viewed as a poor reflection of life, but as a concrete means for expressing inner laws and the harrowing experiences undergone by the soul in initiation. In this sense the art of drama is actually much more realistic or "truer" than ordinary biography. For Steiner, if one wished to give an accurate portrayal of the initiation of an individual person, one of the best literary means would not be ordinary historical or biographical prose, but the medium of drama:

The Greek philosopher Aristotle said of drama that it is truer than a mere historical account; for whereas the latter only reproduces what has happened by chance during the course of time, the former depicts the actions of human beings, as they should and must be in accordance with their inner reasons. And Goethe calls artistic creations revelations of the secret laws of nature, which would have remained eternally hidden without them. (Steiner, 1987, p. 150).

According to Steiner, the content of the ancient Greek mystery dramas depicted two specific events. On the one hand they showed the tragic destiny of Demeter and her daughter Persephone, while on the other they depicted the death and rebirth of Dionysos. At this point one could believe that there is absolutely no connection between Steiner's uses of pseudonyms in these two texts written twenty years apart. However, examining the topic from *the perspective of Steiner's presentations on reincarnation*, one sees that there is a deeper underlying connection between these two texts.

In his last complete karma lecture of 23rd September 1924, Steiner unveiled the link between Karl Julius Schröer and the mystery dramas. Steiner informed his listeners that some of the features ("Züge") of his teacher Schröer were to be found in the drama character of Professor Capesius. In this same lecture Steiner revealed his findings on Schröer's karmic connection with both the 10th century dramatist Hroswitha and the ancient Greek philosopher Plato. He explained that the truth of this fact can be ascertained by concentrating on the notion of Platonic love in Schröer's writings, especially the small volume he had reviewed in 1884: *Goethe and Love*. (Steiner, 1991, pp. 162-163). However, one must not stay at this one lecture from 1924, but bring Steiner's findings into connection with his August 1911 lectures on the second mystery drama *Die Prüfung der Seele*. There he presents his results on an earlier incarnation of Plato. Who is the earlier incarnation of Plato? According to Steiner, none other than Dionysos the younger, reborn from the heart of Dionysos Zagreus after the latter's death, the dramatic events depicted in the ancient Greek mysteries and which are described in Steiner's 1904 essay.

Naturally, our aim here is not to investigate the correctness of Steiner's findings on reincarnation; rather, as stated above, our concern is with the *consistency* of Steiner's different presentations. Here we can see that regarding the use of pseudonyms and the question of Plato and reincarnation, there is a remarkable unity and internal consistency between Steiner's earliest letters and published texts of the 1880s, the mystery dramas and their accompanying essays and lectures from 1904-1913, and the late lectures on karma and reincarnation of 1924. And finally, it is not without interest to note that even Steiner's first extant letter of January 1881 on the father and son Schröer concludes with a reference to this same ancient Greek philosopher, when the nineteen-year old Steiner tells a friend: "But you have also studied Plato! – And most probably his *Republic*! Study it again when you get the chance; perhaps you will change some of your views." (Steiner, 1985a, p. 16).

The Question of Steiner's Rosicrucianism

What about Steiner's use of the pseudonym in the essay "Aristoteles on Mystery Drama" – is there perhaps any significance to the name "Dr. K. Tinter"? Leaving aside the title of "Dr.", one could indeed inquire why he chose to use "K. Tinter" instead of "R. Steiner". For the time being we can only suggest a hypothesis. Like with the name "Chr. Oeser", perhaps the pseudonym "K. Tinter" is simply an anagram. That is to say, if we rearrange the letters and take the final 'r' from the name Tinter and place it before the 'K', we get: "R. K. Tinte". In line with the subtitle to the first drama as a "*Rosenkreuzermysterium*", and in accordance with Steiner's use of the Rosicrucian letters in the seal of the first drama "E.D.N.J.C.M.P.S.S.R." (Latin: "Ex Deo Nascimur, In Christo Morimur, Per Spiritum Sanctum Reviviscimus", in English: "Out of God we are born, in Christ we die, through the Holy Spirit we are reborn"), could the letters "R.K." stand for the word *Rosenkreuzer*? The pseudonym would then be an indication that this 1904 text on Aristotle and mystery drama is written with "*Rosenkreuzer Tinte*", i.e. with *Rosicrucian ink*. As with the first pseudonym "From A.Z." and its relation to the entire alphabet, this second pseudonym seems to be pointing to the *spiritual tradition* in which to situate Steiner's written works. All this gives rise to the questions: what is the true nature of Steiner's relation to Rosicrucianism? – And could it be the mystery dramas themselves that furnish important material for answering this question?

Of course, Steiner's earlier use of these two pseudonyms does not definitely tell us that he has hidden himself behind a character in the mystery dramas. Nevertheless, it could be an indication to more fully investigate this possibility. If this turns out to be the case, the consequences would be considerable for Steiner research. For in addition to his long autobiographical lecture of February 1913 and his written autobiographical text *Mein Lebensgang*, one would now have a third autobiographical document – an artistic depiction of Steiner's individual path of initiation.

One might ask why Steiner would even contemplate concealing his identity behind a drama character. A possible response could be given from the perspective of Steiner's apparent adherence to certain Rosicrucian tenets. For example, in a 1912 lecture entitled "The Dawn (*Morgenröte*) of Modern Occultism" Steiner stated that the Rosicrucian inspiration is given in every century, but the bearer of the impulse cannot be directly or "externally named". (Steiner, 1995, p. 233). Hence, a character name in a drama could be one way to indirectly or *internally* refer to the bearer of this inspiration. In favour of this interpretation is the fact that the first two dramas of 1910 and 1911 are said to have taken place "through" (*durch*) Rudolf Steiner. Steiner's employment here of the preposition "durch" has caused bemusement and puzzlement among researchers. However, one should see that it belongs to a long and distinguished spiritual tradition. The above-mentioned text of Böhme, *Aurora, oder Morgenröte im Aufgang*, is similarly expressed in the most celebrated early edition as given *durch* Jakob Böhme. (Böhme, 1730). Moreover, the German idealistic philosopher Fichte's text, *Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben*, was likewise presented to the public *durch* Johann Gottlieb Fichte. (J.G. Fichte, 1806; a second well-known Fichte text from 1808 also uses this preposition in its title: *Reden an die deutsche Nation durch Johann Gottlieb Fichte*). The title of Böhme's text is echoed in Steiner's book 1901 *Die Mystik im Aufgange des neuzeitlichen Geisteslebens* (and it also contains a chapter on Böhme), while recent research has shown, for instance, the profound parallels between Fichte's *Anweisung* and Steiner's 1902 *Christentum als mystische Tatsache*. (Traub, 2011, pp. 958-971). In his autobiography Steiner repeatedly describes the writing of this book on Christianity as a personal "Prüfung der Seele" (Steiner 2000a, 363-366), i.e. using the same words as the title of the second mystery drama of 1911, which as we saw is an artistic portrayal of the reality of reincarnation. This is especially attempted in the medieval scenes six to nine of this second drama, which are set in the years 1300-1333. This period is another precise historical indication from Steiner, yet this time given directly in the dramas themselves. The early fourteenth century is the epoch of the Christian mystics Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler and Heinrich Suso; and like Böhme, they are all discussed at length in Steiner's *Mystik* book. Accordingly, might all of the above texts be related to the mystery dramas? It could be the task of historical-critical Steiner research to further investigate interconnections of these kinds.

However, the question of whether Steiner himself is a character in the dramas still remains. What would be the best *starting point* for solving this self-titled "Rosicrucian mystery"? Schiller once said of the solution to Goethe's enigmatic *Märchen (Fairy Tale)*: "The key lies in the Tale itself" (in Fischer 1925, p. 171). That

is to say, the true solution is not external to the *Fairy Tale*, but to be found internal to it, *immanently* within it. Exactly the same immanent approach is adopted by Steiner in his essay on the text *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz Anno 1459*: “Untroubled by everything that has already been written about this book [...] What the book seeks to say must be drawn from out of the book itself.” (Steiner, 1984b, p. 332). Naturally, one should not solely remain within a single body of work. Although in an immanent study the starting-point should be within the work itself, during the actual process of critically testing an author’s claims one must continually *move out* beyond a work and compare them with the views and works of other historical and cultural figures, just as we attempted to do in this essay with Steiner’s statements and the writings of Karl Julius Schröer and Tobias Gottfried Schröer. The first mystery drama is a metamorphosis of Goethe’s *Fairy Tale*, and the drama’s subtitle explicitly places it in the Rosicrucian tradition. (Concerning this relationship, see Höhne, 2006, pp. 124-131). Thus, in order to solve the problem of Steiner as a character, instead of beginning with the secondary literature, or handed-down second and third-hand private conversations, another scientific principle would be to start examining this issue using an immanent starting point within Steiner’s own oeuvre. For example, why not start with his statement that the seeds of the first drama lie in the year 1889? Again, in a scientific study it is absolutely not a question of believing or disbelieving Steiner’s words here, but of objectively investigating their historical veracity.

Conclusion

There is currently much talk about the future of the anthroposophical movement. However, in line with the following words of Goethe, one will never clearly understand its future, until one has properly understood its past, for both are reciprocally intertwined: “Wer das Vergangene kannte, der wüßte das Künftige; beides Schließt an heute sich rein, als ein Vollendetes, an.” (Whoever knows the past, knows the future; both are purely and perfectly joined in the present; Goethe, 1816, p. 424). This movement has nothing to fear from a historical-critical examination of Steiner’s works. On the contrary, as this essay has attempted to show in relation to Steiner’s use of pseudonyms, an employment of this method might even open up more fruitful perspectives. And not least, this seems to be precisely what Steiner himself had hoped that researchers would do. Not for them to blindly accept his statements on authority, or to lurch into the other extreme of rejecting his claims in advance, but for scholars to *genuinely* subject his works to the most exacting historical and critical analysis:

However, I request you not to believe me concerning these things, but to test them against everything you know in the course of history, even more, against everything that you can experience. I am completely calm about this fact: that the more precisely you examine these things, the more precisely you will find them confirmed. In the age of intellectualism I am not appealing to your belief in authority, but to your intellectual examination. (Steiner, 1995, p. 55).

References:

- Böhme, J. (1730). *Aurora, oder Morgenröthe im Aufgang durch Jacob Böhmen*, in: *Theosophia Relevata*, volume 1, edited by Johann Georg Gichtel. S.I.
- Clement, C. (2007). *Die Geburt des modernen Mysteriendramas aus dem Geiste Weimars. Zur Aktualität Goethes und Schillers in der Dramaturgie Rudolf Steiners*. Berlin: Logos Verlag
- Fichte, J.G. (1806). *Die Anweisung zum seeligen Leben, oder auch die Religionslehre. Durch Johann Gottlieb Fichte*. Berlin: Im Verlag der Realschulbuchhandlung.
- Fichte, J.G. (1808). *Reden an die deutsche Nation durch Johann Gottlieb Fichte*. Berlin: In der Realschulbuchhandlung.
- Fischer, T. (1925). *Goethes Märchen*. Leipzig: Reclam.
- Goethe, J.W. (1816). "Weissagungen des Bakis" (no. 16), *Gedichte*, in: *Goethes Werke I*. Vienna/Stuttgart: Cotta.
- Goethe, J.W. (1907). *Faust I*, edited by K. J. Schröer. Leipzig: O. R. Reisland.
- Goethe, J.W. (1989). *West-östlicher Divan*. Munich: Beck.
- Höhne, A. G. (2006). *Spiegelmetaphorik in Rudolf Steiners „Vier Mysteriendramen“*. *Textsemantische Untersuchungen*. Tübingen & Basel: A. Francke Verlag.
- Novalis. (2007). *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, ed. and trans. D. W. Wood. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.
- Schröer, K. J. (1884). *Goethe und die Liebe*. Heilbronn: Gbr. Henninger.
- Schröer, K. J. (2000). *Goethe and Love*, ed. and trans. D. W. Wood. New York: Mercury Press.
- Schröer, T. G. (1839). *Leben und Thaten Emerich Tököly's und seiner Streitgenossen. Ein historisches Drama von A.Z.* Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Einhorn.
- Steiner, R. (1884). *Der Ring*. *Karlsruher Wochenschrift*.
- Steiner, R. (1889). *Goethe als Vater einer neuen Aesthetik*. Vienna: Verlag der 'Deutschen Worte', Engelbert Pernerstorfer.
- Steiner, R. (1892). *Wahrheit und Wissenschaft*. Weimar: Herm. Weissbach.
- Steiner, R. (1979). *Goethes Geistesart* (GA 22), 6th ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1983a). *Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie* (GA 54), 2nd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1983b). *Die Erkenntnis des Übersinnlichen in unserer Zeit und deren Bedeutung für das heutige Leben* (GA 55). 2nd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1984a). *Vom Menschenrätsel* (GA 20), 5th ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1984b). *Philosophie und Anthroposophie. Gesammelte Aufsätze 1904-1923*. (GA 35) 2nd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1985a). *Briefe Band I: 1881-1890*. (GA 38), 3rd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1985b). *Wie erwirbt man sich Verständnis für die geistige Welt?* (GA 154), 2nd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1986). *Von der Initiation. Von Ewigkeit und Augenblick. Von Geisteslicht und Lebensdunkel*. (GA 138), 4th ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1987). *Lucifer-Gnosis 1903-1908* (GA 34), 2nd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1989). *Die Mission der neuen Geistesoffenbarung* (GA 127), 2nd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.

- Steiner, R. (1991). *Esoterische Betrachtungen karmischer Zusammenhänge*, vol. 4 (GA 238), 6th ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1992). *Wege und Ziele des geistigen Menschen* (GA 125), 2nd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1995). *Das esoterische Christentum und die geistige Führung der Menschheit* (GA 130), 3rd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (2000a). *Mein Lebensgang* (GA 28), 9th ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (2000b). *Aus dem mitteleuropäischen Geistesleben* (GA 65), 2nd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (2004a). *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Dramaturgie 1889-1900*. (GA 29) 3rd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (2004b). *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Literatur 1884-1902* (GA 32), 3rd ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.
- Traub, H. (2011). *Philosophie und Anthroposophie. Die philosophische Weltanschauung Rudolf Steiners – Grundlegung und Kritik*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Wood, D. W. (2010/2011). Rudolf Steiner and Professor (Josef) Capesius. In: *New View* (London), 53-63.
- Wood, D. W. (2011/2012). Frau Balde and the Library. In: *New View* (London), 58-70.
- Wood, D. W. (2012). Über Geist und Buchstabe in der Philosophie Rudolf Steiners. Zu Hartmut Traubs Steiner-Studie I. Von Fichte zu Steiner. In: *Die Drei* 12, 29-39.
- Wood, D. W. (2013). Über Geist und Buchstabe in der Philosophie Rudolf Steiners. Zu Hartmut Traubs Steiner-Studie II. Die philosophischen Wurzeln der Anthroposophie. In: *Die Drei* 01, 47-59.
- Zander, Helmut. (2007). *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 2 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Zander, Helmut. (2011). *Rudolf Steiner: Die Biografie*. Munich: Piper.