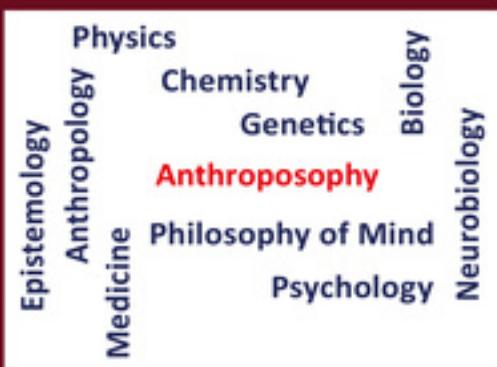


Peter Heusser

# Anthroposophy and Science

An Introduction



PETER LANG  
EDITION

# Foreword

From the very first conversations with the author of this book, it soon became apparent that we shared a common attitude towards medicine: the struggle to understand and put into practice an integration of all effective measures when caring for people as individuals in both health and illness. In this book, Peter Heusser has made the unusual attempt to create the foundation for a complete scientific and empirical integration of the different medical approaches. The result goes far beyond the customary confrontation of the natural scientific and spiritually oriented ways of looking at medicine and, with his evidence-based logic, provides inspiration for a completely new insight into human nature for a medicine of the future. The rapid and skilful change of perspective which runs throughout the book testifies to a rare tolerance of apparently opposing ways of thinking and to a medical attitude which can only develop from a devoted involvement with patients. Through the view of the human being developed here the ancient but often paternalistically compromised medical attitude of “*voluntas aegroti suprema lex*” seems to me to be given new meaning and a new justification. But what fascinates me the most is that Peter Heusser’s reflections encourage the demand for a scientific re-evaluation using suitable methods, methods which cover a massive span of the whole spectrum from atomic physics via biological diagnostic techniques in molecular medicine all the way to qualitative research in the arts and social sciences and finally to medical research in the healthcare sector. While working through the book the reader develops a multitude of hypotheses, making this book truly innovative and integrative in the real sense of the word. I hope that all those involved in healthcare provision will read this book, so that an integrative way of thinking in medicine can help to strengthen the practice of individualised medicine.

Witten, October 2010

**Univ.-Prof. Dr. med. Eckhart G. Hahn, MME (UniBe)**  
**Dean of the Faculty of Health**  
**Witten/Herdecke University**



## Preface to the first edition

In the biological and psychological sciences and in human medicine in particular, the time has come to think in a new and serious way about the nature of the human being. The successful explanation of the physical-material *conditions* for life, the soul and the spirit in human beings, has led to the belief that life, soul and spirit are *caused* by matter, lacking a reality of their own. The scientific view has indeed focused very successfully but very one-sidedly on the material level. However, this has led to the progressive loss of what is essentially human in the human being. For at the level of molecules, the difference between man, animal and other living creatures becomes blurred. And living creatures even share the elements of these molecules with the non-living world of matter. Where is the uniquely human now to be found? It cannot be found in the realm of substance, leading John Martin to state in 2000: “Perhaps the great problem of the next 100 years in biology will be *to understand what makes a human being a human being*” (Martin, 2000, 934).

In this book I have attempted to make a contribution to solving this problem and to show that it is possible to have a scientific view of mankind which not only recognises the reality of the material side of the human being, but the living, emotional and spiritual sides as well. This work was produced in 2009 under its German title “*Anthroposophische Medizin und Wissenschaft. Erkenntniswissenschaftliche und konzeptionelle Beiträge zu einer ganzheitlichen medizinischen Anthropologie*” as a habilitation thesis at the University of Witten/Herdecke. While engaged on its creation I received many valuable suggestions and support from various sides.

I wish to thank my medical colleagues Prof. Peter Matthiessen, Prof. Arndt Büssing and Dr. Friedrich Edelhäuser for constructive criticism, the development biologists Prof. Wolfgang Schad and PD Dr. Bernd Rosslenbroich, the geneticist Dr. Johannes Wirz, the physicist Dr. Stephan Baumgartner and the mathematician and epistemologist Dr. Renatus Ziegler. My thanks are also due to the Software AG foundation for the award of a habilitation grant and the Asta Blumfeld Stiftung, the Dr. Hauschka Stiftung, the Mahle Stiftung, the Iona Stichting, the Stichting Triodos, Weleda AG and the Gerhard Kienle Stiftung for contributions to the printing costs without which this book could not have been published. I am also very grateful to the Schattauer Verlag for being immediately willing to publish this work and in particular to the editor Marie Teltcher for her reliable work and her quick and friendly assistance.

My thanks go also to my secretary and assistant Marina Friebe for technical help and to my dear wife Ursula Heusser for her help in tracking down errors of style and typing mistakes and for her patience and constant support during the months when this work was in progress, in addition to many other professional duties. I therefore dedicate this book to her with my love.

Witten/Herdecke, September 2010

**Peter Heusser**

## Preface to the 2016 English edition

This book is the updated and slightly expanded English version of my book which was published in 2011 by Schattauer Verlag, Stuttgart, under the title “*Anthroposophische Medizin und Wissenschaft. Beiträge zu einer integrativen medizinischen Anthropologie*”. This was my habilitation thesis presented to the University of Witten/Herdecke in 2009. The aim of this thesis was – and still is – to present a scientific explanation of the view of the human being underlying anthroposophical medicine, a view which is also capable of providing the conceptual basis for modern integrative medicine. The book starts with the epistemological explanation of science and the concept of reality developed by Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) in his writings on the theory of knowledge and applied to both natural and spiritual science. This is followed by the systematic application of this concept of science and reality first to the understanding of substance in modern physics and chemistry, then to present-day issues in genetics, molecular biology and morphogenesis, to neurobiology, the mind-body problem, psychology, the philosophy of mind and also to the question of human free will. This results in a modern, scientifically founded holistic understanding of the human being which is capable of overcoming the reductionistic naturalism in these sciences and in medicine. The human being ceases to be viewed mechanistically as a molecular-genetic and neurobiological machine but instead as a differentiated being composed of body, life, soul and spirit. This scientifically founded understanding of the human being corresponds fully with that of anthroposophy. However, when reading this book it must be borne in mind that the anthropological medical concepts developed in it will only be comprehensible when their epistemological basis has been understood. For this reason, Chapter 2 is a prerequisite for the further chapters. This book also shows how the concept of anthroposophy already existed in the European history of science in the early and mid-19th century and how Rudolf Steiner then laid the methodological and epistemological basis for modern anthroposophy as spiritual science at the turn of the 20th century. He went on to develop the subject matter of this modern anthroposophy and, in cooperation with various experts, to take it all the way to practical applications in various cultural realms including medicine. Particular importance is attached to showing how anthroposophical spiritual scientific concepts and methods relate to the scientific research in modern medicine and how far research in this area has progressed and how much still needs to be done.

The general scientific principles of epistemology, physics, chemistry, genetics, morphogenesis, biology, neurobiology, psychology, philosophy of mind,

anthropology, and anthroposophy presented in this book are developed in such a way that they are valid outside the field of medicine. They are then applied to medicine, simply because this is my own specialism. But they could just as well be applied to pedagogy, curative education and other specialist areas which deal with the human being as a whole. In fact it was primarily specialists from the pedagogical field who reacted with particular enthusiasm to the first edition of this book. Basically this book first provides an introduction to anthroposophy and its relationship to the sciences mentioned above, and then goes on to relate this to a practical area of application using medicine as an example. This updated English edition is therefore entitled: “Anthroposophy and Science. An Introduction”.

In conclusion I should like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the translator of this book, Lynda Hepburn BSc MSc MITI, Edinburgh, for the energy, patience, care and reliability which she has brought to this translation. She has achieved a clarity and familiarity with the concentrated line of thought of the German original and has succeeded in retaining the often complex philosophical and scientific subject matter in her rendering into the English idiom, something that is no easy undertaking. I should also like to thank Lydia Garnitschnig, Vienna, for her very careful proofreading, Erich Colzman and the Barthels Feldhoff Stiftung as well as Ursula Piffaretti and the Stiftung zur Förderung anthroposophischer Institutionen for funding the printing costs, and Mrs. Marion Ulrich of Schattauer Verlag, Stuttgart, as well as Dr. Benjamin Kloss of the Peter Lang International Academic Publishing Group, Frankfurt am Main, for their willingness to print the book under licence at Peter Lang, enabling its distribution in the international English-speaking world. My thanks also go to Dr. Jürg Lehmann, Arlesheim, Basel, who enabled the funding of the translation in memory of the philosopher Werner A. Moser (1924–2003), Basel. To Werner Moser I owe my first and well-grounded introduction to the fundamentals of anthroposophical science 40 years ago, something which became the foundation of my later medical scientific career and therefore also of this book. I dedicate the book to him, in grateful memory.

Herdecke, January 2016

**Univ.-Prof. Dr. med. Peter Heusser, MME (UniBe)**  
**Gerhard Kienle Chair for Theory of Medicine, Integrative and**  
**Anthroposophical Medicine,**  
**Institute of Integrative Medicine**  
**Faculty of Health**  
**Witten/Herdecke University**  
**Germany**

## Translator's Note

German and English, like any pair of languages, do not have exact equivalents for a range of words, so in translation a solution has to be found to try to convey the author's meaning. Sometimes this is because the two terms do not have the same scope, one being a broader term while its possible translations are more specific and narrow. In this book, this applies particularly to the German words "Seele" and "Geist". While the English "soul" and "spirit" may seem obvious equivalents, this is not quite true and is certainly not the case for all instances of their use. In addition, the adjectives "seelisch" and "geistig" cannot be rendered into English by any simple single term.

In general, the German "Seele" has a much broader meaning than the English "soul" and is used far more frequently, including in technical contexts. In translating it here, I have sometimes used simply "soul" as for the comparison "Leib-Seele-Verhältnis = relationship between the body and soul", but references to "Seelenleben" have sometimes been rendered as "the emotional life" while for the "denkende Seele des Menschen" I have opted for the "thinking human mind" which sounds more acceptable than the "thinking soul". In yet other instances "Seele" is better translated by "psyche".

The adjective "seelisch" designates the whole array of soul or consciousness functions, not merely emotions, and different solutions have been used in different contexts.

While "Geist" has been translated as "spirit" in the majority of instances, this was not possible in some contexts. "Geist-Gehirn-Theorien" is better rendered as "mind/brain theories" and in yet other instances "intellect" may be nearer to the intended meaning. "Spirit" can easily be misunderstood (as can soul), though this book soon gives clear definitions of both to avoid misunderstandings.

While these two nouns and their adjectives constitute the most frequent difficulties, many other terms which occur less frequently in the text also present similar or related problems. It is worth bearing this in mind and, rather than always assuming the standard meaning of any term, paying careful attention to how it is applied in the context of the material in this book.

As I am obviously not the first translator to be faced with these issues, the readership is referred to two helpful discussions on the translation of anthroposophical terminology, one by Michael Wilson in “*The Philosophy of Freedom*” (Steiner, 2011, xiii–xxvii) and the final paragraph of Owen Barfield’s introduction to his translation of Steiner’s “*Von Seelenrätseln*”, “*The Case of Anthroposophy*” (Steiner, 1978a).

Edinburgh, January 2016

Lynda Hepburn BSc MSc MITI