

AN ANTHROPOSOPHY FOR THE ANTHROPOCENE
Review of Peter Heusser's *Anthroposophy and Science. An Introduction*
Peter Lang Edition, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 2016¹
ISBN 978-3-631-67224

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The author of this book, Peter Heusser, is a medical doctor and professor for the Theory of Medicine, Integrative and Anthroposophic Medicine, and also the Head of the *Institute for Integrative Medicine* at Witten/Herdecke University in Germany.³

This book, which was originally titled “Anthroposophic Medicine and Science” in its first edition (2011), is one of the best synthesis and introduction about the contribution that could be brought to science from the anthroposophic worldview. The main goal of the author is to present the state of the body of knowledge and practice that are part of the emergent anthroposophical perspective on human nature and on the living aspects of the world. The author spent a very long period studying the anthroposophical foundations that could regenerate the science and practice of medicine. A major part of the book is devoted to the presentation and discussion of the anthroposophical perspective on the core scientific domains of science, especially those that contribute significantly to the field of medicine: physics and chemistry (in Chapter 3); biology (in Chapter 4); Neurology, psychology (in Chapter 5).

As clearly expressed by the author in the opening of his Preface (9)⁴, the scientific worldview based on the mechanistic point of view that was introduced by the rationalistic and materialistic metaphysical orientation of the Enlightenment period and strongly actualized in the turn of the late XX-th Century and the beginning of the last Century is now confronted to its paradigmatic maturity and to its increasing rejection. We have seen the emergence of many metaphysical alternative proposals, such as the Whitehead's process cosmology and some variations of the phenomenological or nominalist perspective. Time has come for a new theory of knowledge that will bring together a new realistic ontology of the reality with a cosmology that includes the life (observed as “the thing in itself”) and in conjunction with a new path of knowledge that can integrate the manifested face of the reality perceptible through human senses (or from the support of technological proxy devices) with its inner intuited ontological reality and processes. This new worldview would pave the way for a renaissance in the understanding of the integral nature of human being and about the living cosmological links that relate human beings with the chain of beings that collectively constitute the Cosmic Intelligence (the IA – the

¹ This edition is an updated and expanded English version of the German edition *Anthroposophische Medizin und Wissenschaft. Beiträge zu einer integrativen medizinischen Anthropologie*, Schattauer GmbH, Stuttgart, Germany, 2011.

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³ Peter Heusser contributed in the past to this journal: see Vol. 1 No 2&3: 161–166, 2011.

⁴ The (...) indicates the page's reference from the book.

Sophia) that constitute the “life stream” of the universe. A cosmic living intelligence that supports also all embodied living entities that manifest themselves in the material plan of the reality, including the microcosm that constitutes the human being.

This new wave in the development of science could come from an anthroposophy that brings to humanity a new conscious and objective understanding about its participation in the co-creation of the cosmos. Humanity, in its different cultures inherited from the Tradition a theosophical explanation of the cosmological realities. Time has now come for the development of a responsible and objective wisdom of the living processes that the human beings are due to share as co-agent, based on a conscious freedom, with the living Intelligence(s) of the cosmos. This cosmic role is part of the “Entelecheia” of the human dynamics of evolution and it is in complete congruence with the new phase in the development of the planet Earth where human beings will be the determinant agent of its transformation. To engage itself in a creative way in such an evolutionary process, humanity needs an integral anthroposophy to assume with responsibility the co-creation of the evolution of the Earth as well as to care for its own development as human being. The Anthropocene⁵ will require an effective anthroposophy to enlighten the future development of the Earth and the evolutionary progress of humanity toward its ideal of form and spirit.

The book brings together five constituents that can explain the specific contribution of the anthroposophy to science and particularly to medicine: a) the epistemological foundations of anthroposophy; b) the domain of a spiritual science; c) the anthroposophical perspective in the different core domains of science; d) the renewing of the integral understanding about the reality of the human nature; and finally, e) the characterization of an anthroposophical medicine based on a spiritual science. In this respect, Peter Heusser’s book constitutes a major contribution to the consolidation of the state of knowledge on anthroposophical medicine. It should receive all the attention of those who are looking for a non-reductionist understanding about the nature of human being in term of its health conditions, its integral evolution, as well as for the medical help – he should receive from an integral science and practice of medicine.

The introductory elements of the book (Chapter 1) consist in an historical account of the evolution of what was perceived earlier in the last Century as “alternative medicine”. The anthropological medicine (science and practice), founded on the body of knowledge and practice developed by Rudolf Steiner during the early decades of the last Century is presented by the author as an integrative conceptual framework that could serve to bring together the understanding of the natural aspects of human nature and the suprasensible apprehension of its spiritual aspects. The task

⁵ The notion of the beginning of a new epoch in the evolution of Earth that originated with the wave of the conquests in the XVI-th Century is becoming a key concept debated in Earth sciences and in ecology. The new journal *The Anthropocene Review* is now the main platform for its related scientific conversation. See particularly: W. Steffen and alters, The Anthropocene: conceptual and historical perspective, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 2011, N0 369: 842–867; and M.A. Maslin and S.L. Lewis, Anthropocene: Earth System, geological, philosophical and political paradigm shift, *The Anthropocene Review*, 2015, 2(2): 108–116.

identified is the development of a medicine and its related sciences that integrates both aspects of the reality, the material manifestations and the objective spiritual side of that same reality.

The Chapter 2 (25–60) is definitively the key of this book. It presents the epistemological, ontological and cosmological foundations that were developed by Rudolf Steiner and that support the edification of an anthropological integrative medicine. The author explains in detail the major elements that frame the Steinerian epistemology and the integral perceptual process to access the full spectrum of the reality. The deepening of the experience of phenomena and the transformation of the human thinking faculties are well discussed and presented as prerequisites to the development of an integral science. The epistemological foundations of a scientific anthroposophy are discussed in this chapter. It would have been of interests to raise the implications that these issues represent for the adequate cognitive development of the future scientists and practitioners that would align with an integrative science aiming to integrate both sides of the Unitarian reality, that are the material/phenomenal and the suprasensitive/intuitive. The transformation of the scientist's knowing capabilities and also the processes of the collective construction-validation of knowledge will certainly represent two major challenges for the “normalization” of a spiritual science and an integral anthroposophy.

The Chapters 6 and 7 could be read in continuation of this Chapter 2 because they consist (in Chapter 6) in the explanation of the passage from an actual anthropology to an anthroposophy of the human nature and in the discussion of what are the differences or improvements between these two approaches. The Chapter 7 (251–270) is a detailed description of the Steinerian epistemological intent for the development of the scientific foundations and practice related to the scientific investigation and knowledge of the spiritual plan of the reality.

The Chapters 3, 4 and 5 constitute a meticulous presentation of the key anthroposophical notions and concepts that serve for the re-interpretation of the phenomena that are studied in the diverse fields of science that are mobilized for the advancement of the science and practice of medicine: physics and chemistry, biology, genetics, neurobiology, morphogenesis, psychology, pedagogy, and mind/consciousness studies. These chapters present a very good synthesis of the complementarity of the “normal scientific knowledge” running in those fields and new perspectives that can brought from the anthroposophical body of knowledge in each of these fields. Of particular importance for those chapters in the crucial distinction that is being made between the soul and the spirit of the human being. This is a distinction that is fundamental for the development of a true scientific anthroposophy.

This distinction between the soul and the spirit of the human being is the “corner stone” for the construction of an integral anthroposophical medicine (science and practice). It represents a turning point in the establishment of a fourfold definition of human nature and the foundation of a reliable micro-cosmology of the human being. This serves as the “pivot” for the concluding Chapter 8 (271-317) in its discussion

about how to pave the way between the current medical research and practice and the contribution of the scientific anthroposophical medicine.

The bibliography presented is relatively extensive and it has been updated in this new edition. This is an important task because of the intent of the book to serve as an introduction to the body of anthroposophical knowledge in regard to its potential contribution to science. This was essential and it has been done. It would have been very useful to present an index of subject and also an index of names. Such a valuable synthesis and introduction to anthroposophical medicine and science should serve for a certain period as a reference book for the many filiations of students dedicated to the study of integrative medicine, and/or about an integrative perspective on the complex realities of the human nature. For this reason, these indexes would improve the usefulness of the book.

In summary, we could say that this book is highly recommended for reading to serious researchers that are aiming for the truth about the real nature of the reality and about the human nature. This book is a pioneer piece of reference for a new perspective that will infuse the human culture in the developing future because the quest for an anthroposophy is becoming a prerequisite for assuming in a responsible way the human freedom, the humanity's integrity and its role of cosmic creativity.