

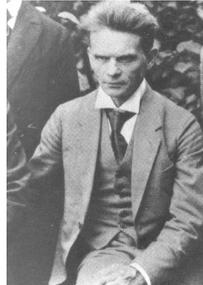
3 THEOSOPHY IN GERMANY ABOUT 1900

To place the events in Germany in their proper perspective, we should first attempt to describe the nature of the German theosophical organization, as well as the position of Steiner. This is not a simple task, since the organization of the Theosophical Society in Germany around the beginning of the twentieth century was very complicated.

It all started on November 17, 1875 in New York City when Mrs H. P. Blavatsky, H. S. Olcott, W. Q. Judge and thirteen other people founded the Theosophical Society. The aim of the society was several fold: to form the heart of universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, belief, sex, caste or skin color; to study and research old and modern religions, philosophies and sciences and prove the significance of such study; and to research the unexplainable laws of nature and the psychic powers of man.¹³¹ Blavatsky was the author of *Isis unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). In 1879 its headquarters were moved from America to Bombay, India, and in 1882 the society bought a rural estate in Adyar, a suburb of Madras. The new “Adyar Theosophical Society” was officially housed there.¹³²



49. Dr Wilhelm Hübbe Schleiden, 1846-1916.



50. Hugo Vollrath, 1877-1943.



51. Dr Rudolf Steiner, 1861-1925.

On the evening of July 27, 1884 at 7:06 p.m., under the chairmanship of Colonel H. S. Olcott, the “Theosophischen Sozietät Germania” [Theoso-

¹³¹ Cranston, Sylvia & Williams, Carey, research assistant, *Het bijzondere leven en de invloed van HELANA BLAVATSKY stichter van de moderne theosophische beweging*, Den Haag: 1995, p. XVIII. [Sylvia Cranston & Carey Williams, research assistant, *The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement*. New York: Putman, 1993.]

¹³² *Ibid.* pp. 195, 224.

phical Society of Germany] was founded in Elberfeld, Germany, with Dr Wilhelm Hübbe Schleiden (1846-1916) as president. Nevertheless, after two and a half years, on December 31, 1886, it was dissolved.¹³³ Hübbe Schleiden, however, continued to work in the same spirit of the theosophical movement and in 1886 started the monthly magazine *Sphinx*. When he noticed that the readers formed little groups in several cities, he founded the “Theosophical Society” in Berlin in 1892 and the first “Esoteric Circle” in November 1893.¹³⁴ Because membership increased rapidly, it was decided to put the whole into an official structure. In the presence of Olcott, on June 29, 1894, in Berlin - as a branch of the European Section - the “German Theosophical Society”¹³⁵ began with Dr Hugo Göring as president, and shortly thereafter, Julius Engel, who was succeeded by Sophy, Countess von Brockdorff.¹³⁶ The national presidency consisted of Hübbe Schleiden and Theodor Reuss (1855-1923). In the course of time Countess von Brockdorff became the leading personality of the German theosophical movement, whereas Berlin, although consisting of a large number of members, was only a theosophical lodge. Julius Engel experienced this as an inhibiting limitation of his activity, so he withdrew as president and founded the lodge in Charlottenburg in 1899. After 1894, lodges arose in other German cities as well.

Hübbe Schleiden was widely criticized because, after returning from his journey to India, he bothered himself very little with the Berlin “Society.” Therefore, later he founded a lodge in Hannover with his cousin Günther Karl Wagner (1842-1930) and other family members. The center of the theosophical movement remained in Berlin where Count and Countess von Brockdorff wielded the scepter.

The schism in the mother-movement also had its reaction in Germany.¹³⁷ Katherine Augusta Tingley (1847-1929) had succeeded Willaim Quan Judge (1851-1896) who had broken away from Adyar. She traveled on a theosophical trip through Europe in 1896; and from her influence a branch of the movement was founded by Paul Raatz on June 24, 1896 in Berlin with physician, Dr Franz Hartmann (1838-1912), as president. Hartmann, however, broke away from Tingley and on September 3, 1897, founded the “International Theosophical Fraternization”¹³⁸ in Munich,

¹³³ Klatt, Norbert. *Theosophie und Anthroposophie, Neue Aspekte zu ihre Geschichte*. Göttingen: Norbert Klatt Verlag, 1993, pp. 61-64.

¹³⁴ Klatt, p. 64.

¹³⁵ Deutsche Theosophische Gesellschaft, (D.T.G.).

¹³⁶ Klatt, p. 65.

¹³⁷ Klatt, p. 66.

¹³⁸ Internationale Theosophische Verbrüderung, (I.T.V.).

which presented itself as ‘Theosophical Society in Germany’¹³⁹ and established its principal seat in Leipzig.¹⁴⁰

It was mid September 1900 when Steiner, at age 39, was asked to give a lecture in the home of Count and Countess von Brockdorff in Berlin about the recently deceased Nietzsche. In addendum 7 the sequence of events relating to Steiner’s joining the theosophical movement is explained in more detail, whereas here emphasis is given to the relation between Steiner and other theosophists.

Steiner became a member of the theosophical movement on January 11, 1902. On January 17 he was designated President of the Berlin lodge and on October 20 he became General Secretary for Germany and joined the Esoteric School. It was Steiner’s intention to start a secret Rosicrucian circle. Klatt writes about this: “He [Steiner] introduced the occult schooling of the Rosicrucians in the German branch of the Theosophical Society and with that laid the foundation for the split of 1912/13. However, Hübbe Schleiden already knew of Steiner’s special interest in the Rosicrucians before his function as General Secretary of the German branch, as his letter of August 14, 1902, indicates. By comments from Hübbe Schleiden to Deinhard, it is evident that Steiner also talked privately about establishing an internal, secret circle of Rosicrucians after the example of the German branch. Hübbe Schleiden refers to this in a letter (October 15, 1903) to Deinhard: to speak and set forth they, “That have to be only discerning and highly educated people - a silent circle of ‘Rosicrucians,’ outwardly unknown, without being recognized, to work generally beneficially and casting seeds.”¹⁴¹

Many members often complained of Steiner’s suppression of his authorities, because this was not common practice among theosophists. For example, Max Gysi writes on September 14, 1904, to Hübbe Schleiden: “Can you tell me on which secret tradition Steiner bases his notes in the last three numbers of his *Luzifer-Gnosis* about ‘How does one acquire consciousness on higher regions?’” Klatt found an answer to this question in the estate of Hübbe Schleiden in a letter from Georg Bruno Haucks to Felix Knoll dated April 26, 1915.¹⁴² In it he writes about Steiner and his magazine *Luzifer*: “He as first one has published in that periodical *How does one Acquire Consciousness on Higher Regions*, and in it just tramples on the directions and recommendations of the Esoteric School of Blavasky/

¹³⁹ Theosophische Gesellschaft in Deutschland, (T.G. in D.).

¹⁴⁰ For a detailed outline see Klatt, pp. 61-67.

¹⁴¹ Klatt, pp. 71-72.

¹⁴² Klatt, p. 83. See also, *The Inner Group Teachings of H. P. Blavatsky*. Compiled and Annotated by Henk J. Spierenburg, San Diego: Point Loma Publications, Inc., 1995.

Besant without references. *All* he said and wrote lets one read more clearly, more simply and more beautifully from the writings of both of them.”

Haucks, who had heard Steiner speak in Berlin, writes on February 8, 1914, to Hübbe Schleiden: “I ever considered Steiner, when he presented the very ancient truths, as if discovered by him, just concealing the theosophical literature, just hustling up scrupulous investigators like Leadbeater, Besant and so on, making no mention of the occult Hierarchies, and showing off as a *German* mystic and discoverer of spiritual worlds.”¹⁴³

The last reference to this matter is a quote from a letter of Hübbe Schleiden dated February 22, 1907 to his friend Deinhard: “What *we* learned twenty years ago was indeed not better than what *he* [Steiner] teaches now. It is true that one does not know where he does get his wisdom from, which is not Indian, as she as specific Christian-German opposes *against* it, and which is not Rosicrucian-cabbalistic, as it works with Indian ideas of modern theosophy; where the ‘Sphinx’ [Mrs Blavatsky] took her wisdom from was always stated.”¹⁴⁴

Hugo von Gizycki writes on January 11, 1909 to Hübbe Schleiden among other things: “I have heard Steiner talk only but three or four times, but then gave up on his lectures. That, what he brought, could indeed only be *perceived clairvoyantly*, and indeed is perceived clairvoyantly; but I did not see any motive at all to consider him as the clairvoyant, because he totally had not brought anything which I did not know already, and which had been clear through the Indian secret doctrine, viz. H. P. B. [H. P. Blavatsky]. Another thing was that the public I came across, did not only appear to me ignorant and without judgment, but particularly possessed by an awful spiritual stuffiness. Steiner did not state the sources from which he had drawn, so that the blindly adoring public; considered him the prophet.”¹⁴⁵

The foregoing describes the situation, which Heindel found in Germany around 1908, as evidenced by his contemporaries.

¹⁴³ Klatt, p. 84.

¹⁴⁴ Klatt, pp. 87-88.

¹⁴⁵ Klatt, pp. 83-84.