



Meditation and Way of Life: Mantras and Texts from the Work of Rudolf Steiner, compiled by Malte Diekmann, Verlag am Michaelshof, 2026 (Book Review)

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v9i9.3523>

Abstract

The book 'Meditation and Way of Life: Mantras and Texts from the Work of Rudolf Steiner' is a new compilation offering a selection of the thoughts of Dr Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the Austrian New Age guru who was the most prolific philosopher of the past century. The book is recommended as a taster for Steiner newbies, as a refresher for Steiner devotees, and as a gift for the curious. The book is 482 pages. Many of those pages present the German text on the right-hand page and an English translation on the left-hand page. This juxtapositioning invites an Anglo reader to apply their 'Google Lens' on their mobile phone (for example) to generate a fresh translation (which they may prefer). The book is not intended as a linear-read. It offers easy dip-and-dive access to the fertile field of Rudolf Steiner's thoughts in handy dollops which range from mere two lines verses through to longer lecture-selections exceeding ten pages. This book is exceptional in being (i) a Rudolf Steiner book, (i) in English, and (iii) published in Germany.

Keywords: *Anthroposophy; Goetheanum; New Age; Michaelshof Community; Spiritual Science; Theosophy*

1. The Book Under Review

Meditation and Way of Life: Mantras and Texts from the Work of Rudolf Steiner, compiled by Malte Diekmann, 2026, Sammatz, Germany: Verlag am Michaelshof, 482 pp., ISBN 978-3-935492-11-9.

Introduction

Dr Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) was the Austrian New Age guru of the Twentieth century. He was arguably the most prolific philosopher of his day and of the century. There are hundreds of books by Rudolf Steiner presently in print; and there are likely hundreds more about Rudolf Steiner and/or about his practical initiatives (with Waldorf education and Biodynamic farming as the two most prominent).

Rudolf Steiner was ‘in his element’ on the stage, rather than on the page. In the lecture hall Steiner was reportedly charismatic, as well as mesmerising and bewildering (Paull, 2018). In his lifetime, most of his books were transcriptions of his lectures and they typically bore some variation of the disclaimer: ‘this is a transcript from shorthand notes taken at the time and it has not been checked by the author’.

The words of Rudolf Steiner that have come down to us are mostly words channelled via others, most often from the shorthand lecture notes of a stenographer, and sometimes as recollections of devotees. Words actually written and published by Steiner (e.g. Steiner, 1928) are much the exception rather than the rule. Readers are well advised to keep in mind that most of Steiner’s words are ‘as reported’ rather than ‘as written’.

Meditation and Way of Life

The compiler of ‘Meditation and Way of Life: Mantras and Texts from the Work of Rudolf Steiner’ states his intention for his new book as follows: “The quotes in this book may give modern people orientation and encouragement on the path to inner training. May it lead to better understanding of Rudolf Steiner’s life work which was to guide people on the path of inner development” (M. Diekmann in Steiner, 2026, p.19).

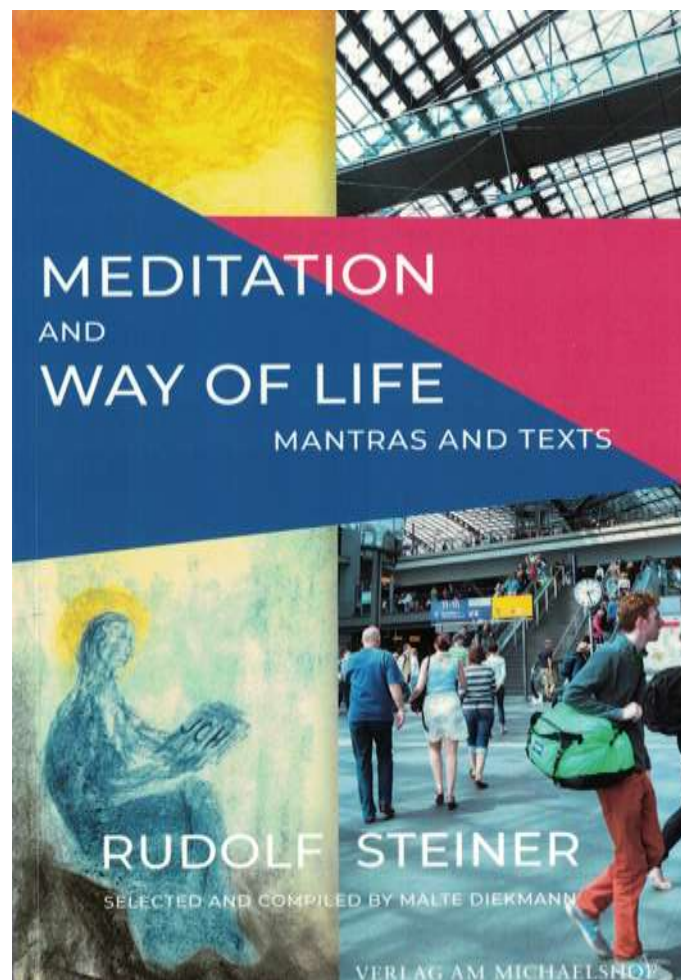


Figure 1. Front cover of “Mediation and Way of Life’.

‘Meditation and Way of Life’ is a ‘dip’n’dive’ compilation of the thoughts of Rudolf Steiner. It is a substantial book of 482 pages. The contents are a personal selection of the compiler, Malte Diekmann. In the ‘Forward’, the compiler states his intention is to offer readers “a coherent selection of texts encompassing the full scope of the anthroposophic path of initiation. Selection of the verses is limited to the realm of central anthroposophy which is accessible for every interested person” (p.7).

‘Meditation and Way of Life’ is presented in two parts: ‘Part I Study and Mediation’; and ‘Part II Way of Life’. It is effectively two books (at least) conjoined at birth. Much of ‘Part I’ is bilingual, offered as English text on the left-hand page and German text on the right. The book begins with a 2-page table of ‘Contents’ (where it is expected) (pp.5-6). At the end of the book (where it is unexpected) there is a surprise 12-page “Detailed Table of Contents” (pp.458-469).

The selections in the book range from cryptic two-liners (e.g. “Thinking, I feel at one”, p.180) to prolix lectures of up to 13 pages (e.g. “How Man can experience karma”, pp.430-442). The selections have been harvested from “Works by Rudolf Steiner” (n=58 approx., pp.470-475) and from “Works by other authors” (n=6 approx., p.475).

Rudolf Steiner adopted various Sanskrit terms, including the ‘mantra’ of the book title, as well as ‘karma’ and ‘om’ (spelled as ‘aum’ in the reviewed book). Sanskrit terms in Steiner’s oeuvre appear to be a carry-over from his time in the Theosophical Society, which immediately preceded his founding of the Anthroposophical Society (Paull, 2022).

The publisher ‘Verlag am Michaelshof’ is an Anthropop publishing venture of the Michaelshof Community based at Sammatz, Germany. The Community was established in 1985 (michaelshof-sammatz.de). Despite the Michaelshof Community being a Biodynamic farming enterprise, there are no quotations in ‘Meditation’ from the ‘Agriculture Course’ (Steiner, 1924). Included, however, is a 3-page “Seed meditation” (pp.313-315).

Production values

‘Meditation and Way of Life’ is a handsomely presented perfect-bound paperback book printed on fine quality paper with an appropriate serif font and with generous margins. It is C Format (Royal size) of approximately 234 mm x 155 mm.

The cover features two images (Fig.1). To the left and painted in an Anthropop-style is a contemplative Saint John bearing his Gospel (inscribed JOH for Johannes) and with his head encircled by a golden halo. To the right is the bustling interior of Basel Railway Station, Switzerland. Basel is a gateway to the Goetheanum (Anthroposophy headquarters at Dornach) which is a short tram ride from the Station.

The book is unusual in being an English-language Anthropop book published in Germany. That is not entirely new ground. Karl Eymann (1889-1943), for example, published an Anthropop book in English in Dresden during the Nazi era (Pfeiffer, 1936), shortly after the fraught circumstance of the Nazis banning the Anthroposophical Society in Germany in 1935 (Esterl, 2006). The publisher of ‘Meditation’, Verlag am Michaelshof, has recently published several other Anthropop books in English (viz. Diekmann, 2026a, 2026b).

On a bookshelf, this German-published English-language book will not pass as an Anglo book (unless it is shelved upside down). The text on the spine reads in Euro-style, from bottom to top, rather than following the Anglo convention of the text on the spine reading from top to bottom.

Translations

The English translations of the selections are by numerous translators, frequently as previously published. Nevertheless, readers are advised that: “In some cases specific expressions in these translations have been corrected to better convey the meaning of the original German” (p.470). Readers are further advised that: “Translations by Anna R. Meuss were made for this edition” (p.470).

The translations are somewhat uneven, reflecting their mixed heritage. Perhaps we can concede that translations from German to English can be challenging, and, that additionally, translations from Rudolf Steiner’s German to English can be doubly challenging.

Many of the selections of Rudolf Steiner appear with the English translation on the left page and the German text on the right page (p.65-303). That is a commendable choice. It enables a reader to use Google Lens (for example) on a mobile phone (for example) to interactively engage with the texts and to immediately generate their own check-translation, which they may well prefer.

One example: ‘Meditation’ offers: “I feel as if uncharmed/ The spirit-child within my soul” (p.156). It is rendered by Google Lens (from the adjacent German, p.157) as: “I feel as if disenchanted/ The spiritual child in the womb of my soul” which may well be regarded as an improvement (lens.google).

Another example, ‘Mediation’ offers: “The heavenly powers of light are carrying me into the spirit’s house” (p.294). It is rendered by Google Lens (from the adjacent German, p.295) as: “Powers of light carry me into the house of the spirit”, which may likewise be regarded as an improvement (lens.google).

Verdict

‘Meditation and Way of Life’ would be a handsome gift of the words and thoughts of Rudolf Steiner. It could suit newbies as a taster, devotees as a refresher, and the curious as an introduction. It could well serve as a primer for Anthroposophy 101.

Yes, there are hundreds of books by and/or about Rudolf Steiner. Yet, despite such a busy book-space, ‘Meditation and Way of Life’ distinguishes itself in offering the option of start anywhere, finish anywhere. A reader has a choice of considering brief entries of a mere several lines (e.g. p.180, p.367) through to extensive lectures across multiple pages (e.g. pp.430-442).

For any reader, ‘Meditation and Way of Life’ offers a less daunting reading experience of Rudolf Steiner than a linear read of, say, 13 lectures on ‘The Evolution of the World and of Humanity’ (Steiner, 1926). The text selection of ‘Meditation’ is idiosyncratic. The any-order reading experience can be as casual, or intense, or as personal as the reader opts.

A translator of Rudolf Steiner lectures offered the double disclaimer: “It should be borne in mind ... that they have been translated from a very difficult form of German, and a translation always lacks the inspiration of extempore speech. Moreover, the author was unable to correct his lectures” (H. Collison in Steiner, 1926, p.v). This is the prevailing norm for most of the Rudolf Steiner corpus that has come down to us.

Much of ‘Meditation and Way of Life’ offers the reader side-by-side English translation and German text. This has the advantage of enabling an interactive experience for any reader (with a mobile phone to hand) of test-translating the German text (using say Google Lens). and thereby making the translation their own.

This book is exceptional in being: (i) a Rudolf Steiner book; (ii) in English; and (iii) published in Germany. In a century, very few German publishers have ventured such a trifecta. Nevertheless, with the

title printed on its spine reading bottom to top (rather than the Anglo convention of top to bottom) this book will always differentiate itself as an 'odd bod' on any Anglo bookshelf (unless shelved up side down).

Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges that the copy of 'Meditation and Way of Life' reviewed here is an unsolicited gift from the publisher and the Michaelshof Community of Sammatz, Germany.

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