The construction of the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft, the people's community or national community, depended on gaining the support of substantial portions of the German populace. An essential part of this process involved the 'coordination' or synchronization of public organizations under National Socialist auspices. In the cultural sphere, this meant a simultaneous dynamic of inclusion and exclusion: some groups and worldviews were deemed suitable for incorporation into Nazism's new order, while others were suppressed. By the same token, broad sectors of German society found various aspects of Nazism attractive and other aspects objectionable. Nazism fostered allegiance to its principles not merely by repression but through a complex process of appropriating longstanding German cultural themes. The idea of the 'national community' was not a Nazi invention; the term was widely used before 1933, and often encompassed notions of blood and race as part of national belonging. In both its liberal and authoritarian variants, the imagined national community promised inclusion, equality, and unity; that its inclusiveness went hand in hand with exclusion and dispossession was not readily acknowledged.

Anthroposophist invocations of national integrity drew on similar sources. Steiner’s followers emphasized the unique importance of the “German essence,” an expression which also played a notable role in Nazi rhetoric. Anthroposophist publications in the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras featured the slogan “the German essence shall heal the world” (*am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen*), proposing that German spirituality held the key to the regeneration of humanity and the cosmos. Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels used the same phrase in May 1933, inaugurating National Socialism’s revival of the German spirit. General ideological affinities between anthroposophy and Nazism assisted practical cooperation around Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, and anthroposophical medicine, but the very same affinities provoked scorn from Nazi officials skeptical of occultism.

The range of ideological overlap linking National Socialist and anthroposophist thought went well beyond vague references to the German essence. Steiner’s movement and Hitler’s movement shared an array of common enemies, from intellectualism to materialism to liberalism to Bolshevism. They also shared positive goals, including a commitment to fundamental spiritual renewal and the conviction of a decisive German historical mission. Life reform tendencies offered a further bridge between Nazism and alternative milieus focused on vegetarianism, organic food, unconventional health therapies, educational reform, back-to-the-land movements and unorthodox spirituality. This supposedly softer side of Nazi political culture, often unnoticed,

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2 Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 299. The phrase is generally attributed to the nineteenth century poet Emanuel Geibel. The locus classicus for the image of Germany as the source of the regeneration of the world is Fichte’s 1807–1808 *Addresses to the German Nation*. For background on Nazi uses see Peter Reichel, *Der schöne Schein des Dritten Reiches: Faszination und Gewalt des Faschismus* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1993), 86–87. Jost Hermand comments: “This brief glimpse into the workings of the ‘new spirit’ in Germany after 1933 shows that the national utopianism causing such a stir in the weeks and months after Hitler’s installation as chancellor was extremely heterogeneous. While there were any number of noble and altruistic appeals to community and fraternity, there was also no shortage of narrow-minded and petit-bourgeois views, which, although their adherents might well have considered them truly idealistic, always seemed to culminate in a perverse faith in a fascistic cult of the elite and suspicious notions of the ‘German essence.’ And yet such tendencies, mixed as they were, represent the best that intellectuals sympathizing with National Socialism could come up with.” Hermand, *Old Dreams of a New Reich*, 165.

3 A harshly negative SD report on “Die Grundlagen der Theosophie” quoted the phrase “Am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen” as an example of devious theosophical attempts to appropriate German nationalist themes (BA R58/6199/3: 381). These themes had been vital to anthroposophy from the beginning.