

Creating a Critical Analysis of a Research Paper's Structure

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The critical Analysis of the papers for Assignment One

The critical analysis of the papers for Assignment One asks you to compare and contrast 2 out of 4 papers (by Bennet, Blain, Walter and Waterhouse and Brink) examining each paper thematically as follows:

- 1) **Structure and literature review** – how has it been written up?
- 2) Research methodology – how the research was carried out, how valid was the choice of methodology for the research (the remit of the project)
- 3) Ethical considerations and reflexive position of the researcher(s) – are they insider/outside in relation to their target groups and how has their place on that spectrum shaped their research?

A methodology for creating a critical analysis of a paper:

- Read the whole paper once and write an overview of the paper (summarize the abstract)
- Research the author(s), their background and make notes on the paper's context
- Read a second time, making notes and annotating thematically – this can be done by colour coding / sticky notes / notes in the margins etc. – according to the given themes:
 - 1) Structure and literature review
 - 2) Research methodology
 - 3) Ethical considerations and reflexive position of the researcher(s)
- Discuss the paper in terms of each one of these themes
- Use your reading on research to analyse the paper in terms of each theme
- For the Compare and Contrast assignment, the above will need to be done for both your chosen papers, which are then discussed and analysed together

The Paper for Analysis:

Cusack, Carole. *'And the Building Becomes Man': Meaning and Aesthetics in Rudolf Steiner's Goetheanum*, in Carole M. Cusack and Alex Norman (eds), *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production*, Leiden, Brill, 2012, pp. 173-191.

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ABSTRACT: "Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Anthroposophical Society, is renowned for his work in widely varied fields. However, his accomplishments as an architect are less well understood. His two greatest achievements in this field – two buildings known as 'Goetheanum I' and 'Goetheanum II' (built after the destruction of the 1st) – have been described as 'sculptural architecture', of a kind similar Expressionist form to Gaudi, Obrist, and Finsterlin. The focus of this chapter, Goetheanum II, is a giant sculptured form, four stories high, with sweeping lines that give the effect of a giant monolithic mass. It is home to the Anthroposophical movement, and holds a 1,000 seat performance hall in which spiritual performances take place. Contributors to an issue of the Swiss architectural magazine *Werk*, in 1960, on the building, agreed that the building's design must have required "a uniform worldview and lifestyle." Indeed, to understand the Goetheanum requires an understanding of Anthroposophy and of Steiner himself. This chapter looks at the meaning in the aesthetic choices of Steiner in the design and construction of the Goetheanum II. Steiner's belief that the people of Western Europe needed to re-orientate their *weltanschauung* is understood as a spiritual need. Interestingly, it was a view shared by many Expressionist artists. Steiner could not have been unaware of a number of significant Expressionistic philosophies and forms present in Europe during his formative period. As a lecturer he travelled extensively, and came into contact with many artists and writers who shared similar ideas. His vision for the Goetheanum was grandiose, like those of many other Expressionists, though unlike many others he had the opportunity to build his vision himself. The Goetheanum has also been referred to as a *gesamtkunstwerk*, also a theme common in the German art scene at the time. Yet Steiner wanted something 'new' for his nascent spiritual group; "Not to build in a style born out of our spiritual world view, would mean to deny Anthroposophy in her own house." As a result the Goetheanum expresses Anthroposophical ideals, a movement which itself professed to inhabit the entire cultural life of its adherents. For Steiner this was came in the form of spiritual realisation, which could best be achieved in the sculptural shapes and organic forms of the Goetheanum"

(https://www.academia.edu/738542/_And_the_Building_Becomes_Man_Meaning_and_Aesthetics_in_Rudolf_Steiner_s_Goetheanum?s_m=b&rhid=37811725032)

Contextualising the paper:

Who was the author, when and where were they writing?

- **Professor Carole M. Cusack, University of Sydney**
- Associate Professor in Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney
- Trained as a medievalist and her doctorate was published as *Conversion Among the Germanic Peoples* (Cassell, 1998)
- Since the late 1990s she has taught in contemporary religious trends, publishing on pilgrimage and tourism, modern Paganism, the interface between religion and politics, and religion and popular cultural forms
- Author of *The Essence of Buddhism* (Lansdowne, 2001), *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith* (Ashgate, 2010), *The Sacred Tree: Ancient and Medieval Manifestations* (Cambridge Scholars, 2011) and has co-edited volumes such as *Anime, Religion and Spirituality: Profane and Sacred Worlds in Contemporary Japan* (with Katharine Buljan, Equinox 2015)
- Editor of *Journal of Religious History* (Wiley) and the *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* (Equinox)
- Context for the Paper: This was written as part of an edited collection *The Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production* (2012), which Carole Cusack co-edited (with Alex Norman) as well as contributed to. It aims to address the gap in scholarly discourse on new religions and their cultural production—the cultural products ensuing from them and how these contribute to making their social worlds

References: The sources for this information were the Contributors' Biog in the edited collection (p. xiv); the Introduction to the collection (pp. 1-18); and <https://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/carole-cusack-on-religion-and-cultural-production/> (last accessed 11 Feb. 2026).



Situating and Outlining the Paper:

Cusack, Carole. 'And the Building Becomes Man': *Meaning and Aesthetics in Rudolf Steiner's Goetheanum*, in Carole M. Cusack and Alex Norman (eds), *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production*, Leiden, Brill, 2012, pp. 173-191.

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- This is a book chapter within an edited volume that explores new religions and their impact 'upon cultural production, exemplifying the theological and spiritual principles of particular movements and demonstrating their substantial impact on wider society' (ref. backcover, Cusack & Norman eds. 2012)
- In Cusack's words, her paper is situated in the group of chapters 'examining cultural production' in the 'religio-spiritual tradition' of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophical Society in terms of its 'cultural legacy'. She says Steiner was poet, painter, architect and also founder of the principles of biodynamic agriculture (Cusack & Norman eds. 2012, p. 7)
- Cusack's chapter 'considers the meanings embedded in the aesthetic choices of Steiner in the design and construction' of both Goetheanum buildings, informed as they are by his view that 'Western Europe needed to reorient its *Weltanschauung* as a spiritual priority and that art was a crucial part of this regenerative process' (p. 174)
- Her research finds that Steiner's Anthroposophical worldview—'that the human being is the basic unit of the cosmos' (p. 189)--as encapsulated in the phrase of her paper's title ('the building becomes man') is expressed in the Goetheanum II, which represents 'a consummate cultural product' of his movement. (pp. 189-90)

Key things to consider in analysing the structure of a paper:

- 1) Is there a good overall structure to the piece? Is there a clear
 - introduction,
 - discussion,
 - analysis
 - and conclusion?
- 2) Is the literature used relevant and referenced appropriately?
- 3) Are the sections of the paper well-linked?
- 4) Does the analysis follow a logical progression?
- 5) Are the concluding findings founded successfully on the discussion and analysis—are they properly supported by these and the citations used?

Key things to consider in analysing the structure and literature review of a paper: The Introduction

The Introduction

- The first paragraph of Cusack's introduction gives brief context for Steiner and his work, saying she will focus on his architecture, and giving an overview of literature relating to the building(s) she will discuss— Goetheanum I & II. She summarises the relevance of this building both for the paper and the collection... situating it as an example of 'cultural production' of a new religion (Anthroposophy)
- The second paragraph of her introduction describes the main focus of the paper—to consider the meanings embedded in Steiner's aesthetic choices for the building
- The third paragraph outlines how she intends to do this--by first considering Steiner's 'spiritual quest' and then 'the place of art and cultural production in his vision for a transformed humanity'

My Finding: This Introduction is very well constructed, giving the reader an overview of the topic, its relevance for the paper and the collection it appears in, the prime research question(s) and the way in which the author intends to address them.

Key things to consider in analysing the structure and literature review of a paper: The Main Body of the Paper

The Main Body of the Paper is divided into sections by the use of subheadings to signpost the discussion and analysis for the reader, as follows:

- Introduction
- Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy
- Steiner's Teachings on Art
- Goetheanum I at Dornach
- Goetheanum II as a Cultural Product of Anthroposophy
- Conclusion

My Finding: The use of subheadings really guides the reader through the discourse of the paper, which follows in logical and linked progression, with each section ending with a conclusion to be reflected and surmised at the end of the paper. The literature used is relevant and referenced appropriately. The sections of the paper are well-linked and the analysis follows a logical progression.

Key things to consider in analysing the structure and literature review of a paper: The Conclusion

The Conclusion

- The first paragraph of Cusack's conclusion summarises her situation of Steiner as an architect within Anthroposophy and within wider literature (p. 189)
- The second paragraph of her conclusion begins by referring back to the title of the paper, returning to its main focus as described in the introduction—to consider the meanings embedded in Steiner's aesthetic choices for the building, expressing the finding that 'Steiner's architecture... cannot really be understood without reference to the anthroposophical worldview and Steiner's "spiritual science".' (p. 189)
- She draws upon the literature used in her analysis (particularly Brain) to skillfully synthesis her findings, arguing that Steiner was acutely aware of cultural production, tirelessly engaged in it, and that his architecture, as expressed in Goetheanum II is a 'consummate cultural product of Anthroposophy' (p.190)

My Finding: This conclusion is very well constructed, giving the reader an overview of paper, how it addressed its prime research question(s) and expressing its core findings.

To recap some key things to consider in analysing the structure of a paper:

- 1) Is there a good overall structure to the piece? Is there a clear
 - introduction,
 - discussion,
 - analysis
 - and conclusion?
- 2) Is the literature used relevant and referenced appropriately?
- 3) Are the sections of the paper well-linked?
- 4) Does the analysis follow a logical progression?
- 5) Are the concluding findings founded successfully on the discussion and analysis—are they properly supported by these and the citations used?

References for Research and How to Conduct It

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