



**Anima Mundi: The Rise of the World Soul Theory  
in Modern German Philosophy: 202 (International  
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*Miklós Vassányi*

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# Anima Mundi: The Rise of the World Soul Theory in Modern German Philosophy: 202 (International Archives of the History of Ideas Archives internationales d'histoire des idées)

Miklós Vassányi

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This work presents and philosophically analyzes the early modern and modern history of the theory concerning the soul of the world, *anima mundi*. The initial question of the investigation is why there was a revival of this theory in the time of the early German Romanticism, whereas the concept of the *anima mundi* had been rejected in the earlier, classical period of European philosophy (early and mature Enlightenment). The presentation and analysis starts from the Leibnizian-Wolffian school, generally hostile to the theory, and covers classical eighteenth-century physico-theology, also reluctant to accept an *anima mundi*. Next, it discusses early modern and modern Christian philosophical Cabbala (Böhme and Ötinger), an intellectual tradition which to some extent tolerated the idea of a soul of the world. The philosophical relationship between Spinoza and Spinozism on the one hand, and the *anima mundi* theory on the other is also examined. An analysis of Giordano Bruno's utilization of the concept *anima del mondo* is the last step before we give an account of how and why German Romanticism, especially Baader and Schelling asserted and applied the theory of the *Weltseele*. The purpose of the work is to prove that the philosophical insufficiency of a concept of God as an *ens extramundanum* instigated the Romantics to think an *anima mundi* that can act as a divine and quasi-infinite intermediary between God and Nature, as a locum tenens of God in physical reality.

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