

Goethe's Works on Colour:

an overview for English speakers

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In what follows we have attempted to give a complete overview both of Goethe's works on colour in German and of existing translations in English, with notes where these are hard to find or poorly translated. The intention is for this to form the basis for a programme of translation of those works not currently available in good English translations. Feedback, corrections and additions are very welcome!

We have divided up the works by period:

- *Contributions to Optics* (*Beiträge zur Optik*), of which two from four were published (1791–4);
- *Theory of Colours* (*Farbenlehre*, 1810);
- Published articles from his journals *On Science in General and On Morphologie* (*Zur Wissenschaft überhaupt and Zur Morphologie*, 1817–23)
- Unpublished last thoughts (1829–32).

As can be seen, Goethe never really abandoned his reflections on this subject, which occupied him for substantial periods over more than 40 years.

	German title	Year first published	English title (or translation of German title where unpublished)	German Text	Current availability
The Contributions to Optics	Beiträge zur Optik, Erstes Stück	1791	Contributions to Optics, part I	LA I, 3, pp. 6–37	Complete translation by Merry.
	Beiträge zur Optik, Zweites Stück	1792	Contributions to Optics, part II	LA I, 3, pp. 36–53	Complete translation by Merry.
	Beiträge zur Optik, Drittes Stück: Von den farbigen Schatten	c. 1792 (MS only)	(Contribution to Optics, part III: On the coloured shadows)	LA I, 3, pp. 64–81	No known translation
	Beiträge zur Optik, Viertes Stück: Versuch, die Elemente der Farbenlehre zu entdecken	1794 (MS only)	(Contribution to Optics, part IV: Researches into the Elements of a Theory of Colour)	LA I, 3, pp. 190–209	Complete translation by Merry.
Theory of Colours	Zur Farbenlehre, Band I, Teil I [didaktischer Teil]	1810	Theory of Colours; Didactic part	LA I, 4	Complete translation by Eastlake and Miller.
	Zur Farbenlehre, Band I, Teil II [polemischer Teil]		Theory of Colours; Polemic part.	LA I, 5	Complete translation by Duck and Petry.
	Zur Farbenlehre, Band II, Teil I [historischer Teil]	1810	(Theory of Colours; Historical part)	LA I, 6	Only the final chapter, “Confessions of the Author”, translated by Aach.
	Zur Farbenlehre, Anzeige und Übersicht, statt des Supplementären Teils und Erklärung der Tafeln	1810	(Theory of Colours; In Lieu of the Supplementary Part, and Explanation of the Tables)	LA I, 7	Abridged translation of the “Explanation of the Tables” by Aach.

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Journals on “Science in General” and “On Morphology”	Doppelbilder des rhombischen Kalkspats	1817	(The Double Image of Rhombic Calcite)	LA I, 8. pp. 16–20	No known translation
	Elemente der entoptischen Farben	1817	(Elements of Entoptic Colours)	LA I, 8, pp. 21–24	No known translation
	Entoptische Farben	1817	(Entoptic colours)	LA I, 8, p. 45	No known translation
	Farben des Himmels	(1818)	(The colours of the sky)	LA I, 11, pp. 199-200	No known translation
	Entoptische Farben	1820	(Entoptic Colours)	LA I, 8, pp. 94–138	Abridged translation by Ach.
	Chromatik: Altere Einleitung, Neuere Einleitung, Physiologische Farben, Physische Farben, Geschichtliches	1822	(Chromatics; older introduction, newer introduction, physiological colours, physical colours, concerning history.	LA I, 8, pp. 175–232	No complete translation known (collection of individual items)
	Warte-Stein	1822	(Foreshadow/Toothing Stone)	LA I, 8, pp. 270–278	No known translation
	Einleitung zu öffentlichen Vorlesungen über Goethes Farbenlehre	1922	(Invitation to a public lecture on Goethe’s Theory of Colour)	LA I, 8, pp. 342–343	No known translation
	Neuer entoptischer Fall	1922	(A new entoptic case)	LA I, 8, p. 344	No known translation
	Schöne entoptische Entdeckung	1922	A beautiful entoptic discovery	LA I, 8, p. 345	No known translation
	Das Sehen in subjektiver Hinsicht	1822	(Perception with respect to the subject)	LA I, 9, pp. 343–	No known translation
Last Thoughts	Physikalische Preis-Aufgabe der Petersburger Akademie der Wissenschaften	1827	The prize challenge in physics from the St. Petersburg Academy of Science.	LA I, 11, pp. 286–294	No known translation
	Gespräch mit Eckermann über farbige Schatten	1829	(Conversation with Eckermann on Coloured Shadows)	LA II, 5B pp. 1333–1337	No known translation
	Verhandlungen mit Herrn Boisserée den Regenbogen betreffend [auch „Über den Regenbogen“]	1832 (letters to Boisserée)	(Discussion with Mr. Boisserée regarding the rainbow; or On the Rainbow)	LA I, 11, pp. 329–336	No known translation

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS ARE CONTAINED IN THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:

Goethe, J. W. von: *Goethe's Scientific Studies*, ed. and tr. Douglas Miller. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Goethe, J. W. von: *Theory of Colour*, tr. Charles Lock Eastlake. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. (Reprint from 1840.)

Goethe, J. W. von: *Goethe's "Exposure of Newton's Theory"*, tr. Michael Duck and Michael Petry. London: Imperial College Press, 2016.

Goethe, J. W. von: *Goethe's Colour Theory*, ed. Rupprecht Matthaei and tr. Herb Aach. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold / London: Studio Vista, 1971.

Goethe, J. W. von: *Extracts from Goethe's Scientific Work, part III*, tr. Eleanor C. Merry. London: New Culture, 1946 (reprinted London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1989).

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

A useful bibliographic resource is *Goethe in English: a Bibliography of the Translations in the Twentieth Century*, by Derek Glass and Martin Jones (Leeds: English Goethe Society / Modern Humanities Research Association, 2005). Pp. 282-5 and 289-92 cover his work on colour and include details of various early twentieth century translations.

Another useful bibliographic resource, especially for secondary literature, is Fredrick Amrine's annotated Bibliography in: *Goethe and the Sciences: A Reappraisal*, edited by Frederick Amrine, Francis J. Zucker, and Harvey Wheeler, Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, p. 389

NOTES

The standard edition for the German texts is the so-called 'Leopoldina Ausgabe' (LA). In addition to Goethe's scientific works themselves, which are contained in the first section (I. Abteilung), there is a critical apparatus, extensive commentary and further material from notebooks, letters etc. in the second section (II. Abteilung):

Goethe, J. W. von: *Die Schriften zur Naturwissenschaft*. Hrsg. im Auftrage der Deutschen Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina. Weimar: Böhlau Nachfolger, 1947 ff.

There are also several versions of the German texts available online. These include digitised copies of the original publications at: www.deutschestextarchiv.de and www.archive.org as well as a very useful collection of transcriptions of Rudolf Steiner's edition of Goethe's scientific works at www.farbenwelten.de/farben-welten/goethes-farbenlehre.html. This last site also contains selections from Goethe's poetry, prose and sayings relating to the theme. We may translate some of these as offering another 'way in' to Goethe's thought in the area.

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