

What *else* is going on in the General Anthroposophical Society!

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A Reflection in Preparation for the Twelve Holy Nights

Every year we can use the time of the twelve Holy Nights anew to achieve a special understanding and a deepening of insight, and thus allow this time to become a source of strength for the New Year.

This particularly applies to people who feel connected to the impulses Rudolf Steiner gave when the Anthroposophical Society was re-founded at Christmas 1923. After all, the events of the Christmas Conference and the laying of the Foundation Stone are inscribed in the ether and can be renewed particularly vividly during the days of their recurrence in the rhythm of the year, in the sense of a "spirit-remembering."

During his last attempt to renew the mysteries on earth together with the members of the Anthroposophical Society, Rudolf Steiner himself took over the leadership of the Society. Through him, the supersensible anthroposophical movement and the Society thus became one. However, a renewal of the mysteries could only have succeeded if a sufficient number of members had awakened and changed their dispositions in the wake of the Christmas Conference and had attained a concrete inner relationship with the divine-spiritual forces leading humanity. To place oneself in full consciousness at the service of anthroposophy and Rudolf Steiner's intentions would have been the prerequisite for the success of what the Christmas Conference was intended to achieve.

The following remarks aim to show to what extent the Christmas period and the time of the Holy Nights can prepare souls to be receptive to such recognition and experience.

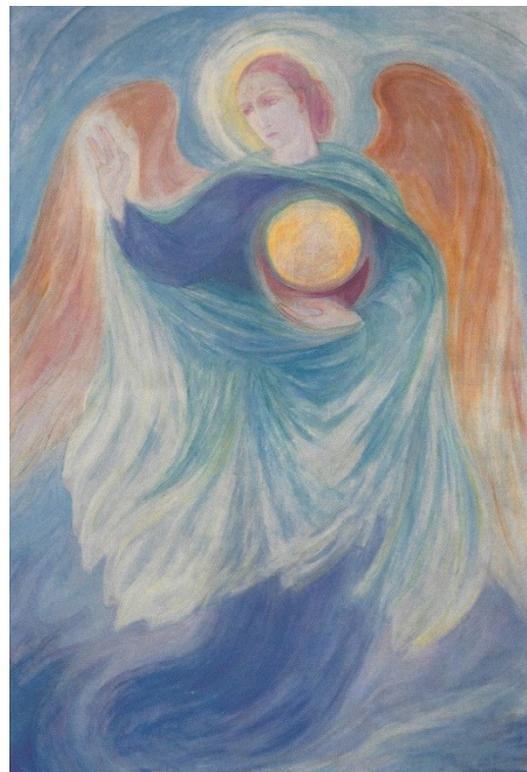
"During this time of Christmas, our earth is especially well suited to receive ideas into its aura ... The earth's aura is pervaded with thoughts, and from these thoughts one can read what the cosmos intends with our earth processes."¹

"For those whose spiritual eyes have been opened ... the time of thirteen days and thirteen nights is a profound time of spiritual experience ... one can see during this time ... in great and mighty imaginations ... what the human being has to go through due to his distance from the Christ Spirit, and how that which is borne from such distance can become the source of resolution in the human

being once again, ... and how the visions of the seers are crowned [during the time of the Holy Nights] ... by the imagination of Christ"²

Those who know the lecture cycle "The fateful year 1923"³ know what a catastrophic state the Anthroposophical Society was in at that time. Until as late as mid-November, Rudolf Steiner struggled with the question of whether he should withdraw from the Society with a small circle of people. There was an enormous resistance within the Society to his intentions, an inner opposition to him from the unconscious soul-life, and thus an opposition to the impulses from the spiritual world, to Michael, the Spirit of the Age.

The momentous opening lecture⁴ at the Christmas Conference begins with a reflection on the wreck and ruins of the first Goetheanum. It had already been wrecked and ruined when the Anthroposophical Society emerged from the World War, and had not healed itself since then. On the contrary, it was as if on this 24th of December 1923 something of the atmosphere of the event of Adam and Eve lived in the back-



Erzengel Gabriel, 1935, Margarita Woloschina

¹ GA 127, 12.11.1916.

² GA 127, 26.12.1911.

³ GA 259, "Das Schicksalsjahr 1923," not translated for the most part.

⁴ Ga 260, 24 December 1923.

ground, something of what *"the human being has to go through due to his distance from the Christ Spirit."* Then follows a change: We should learn to recognize that these ruins are an illusion, "Maya"! An energetic, positive mood is awakened through the fact that Rudolf Steiner now directs our view to the spiritual world, to the spiritual content of the anthroposophical movement, which is now to flow through him into the new Anthroposophical Society as well.

„This Anthroposophical Movement in its totality and in all its details is a service to the divine beings, a service to God. We create the right mood for it when we see it in all its wholeness as a service to God. As a service to God let us take it into our hearts at the beginning of our Conference. Let us inscribe deeply within our hearts the knowledge that this Anthroposophical Movement desires to link the soul of every individual devoted to it with the primeval sources of all that is human in the spiritual world, that this Anthroposophical Movement desires to lead the human being to that final enlightenment — that enlightenment which meanwhile in human earthly evolution is the last which gives satisfaction to man — which can clothe the newly beginning revelation in the words: Yes, this am I as a human being, as a God-willed human being on the earth, as a God-willed human being in the universe.“⁵

Isn't it as if in this very moment of the Christmas Conference, the archetype of the human being shines out and is raised up again? A prelude to the mystery-event of the coming day. From the sight of the ruins that can shake us and awaken the courage to recognize our own failures, we are led into the "Holy Night" by this view up to the gods and to the sources of anthroposophy. On the morning of Christ's Birth, December 25th, the actual mystery act takes place, the creation and the laying of the Foundation Stone.

Notes from an Esoteric Lesson of 1905 can give an idea of what may have happened during that Holy Night of 24 December 1923, especially for those people who witnessed the Christmas meeting with conscious alertness – but which can also happen again and again for us every year if we wish to place ourselves with all our strength into such "divine service."

"[Rudolf Steiner] then came to speak about Christmas and the importance of the feasts of the year; that on Christmas Eve the sun would be at its lowest point and that on the 25th the ascent would begin again, and that on this night the Masters of the White Lodge would have a meeting in which they would pour out the coming year's power of the sun onto the people who wanted to devote themselves completely to them, who wanted to give up all of their personality and asked them for strength. If a person celebrates Christmas in this sense, if a person requests help from the Masters in this sense, then they will send their

power into that person on this 25th of December, so that the Masters' power will work through him."⁶

The solar powers that radiate in this particular night from the highest leaders of humanity, among whom Rudolf Steiner and Christian Rosenkreuz belong, can warm and illuminate all our work for anthroposophy in the world, if we will to turn to them in meditation.

"During meditation and in the reverberations that follow, the spiritual powers of the world flow into you. The world is flooded by spiritual streams that emanate from the great Masters of Wisdom and the Harmony of Feelings. The Masters continually pour out streams of love and wisdom upon humanity, but the souls of human beings are not always ready and open to receive them."⁷

"Meditating means opening the soul to the Master, so that he can provide it with impulses at night..."⁸

For "True meditation ... is a fulfilment of the spiritual will that carries the Spirit of the Age within it. Where such meditation is practiced, a spiritual force can affect earthly events. Today, spiritual worlds want to affect earthly events, but they can only do so if the space for this is created through human meditation."⁹

If we follow the course of the evening lectures in their inner character, it may feel as if a sudden change occurs between 31 December and 1 January. It is as if the inner, sacred, and protected space of the 8 days in which Rudolf Steiner unfolded the development of the mysteries and the work of Gilgamesch/Alexander and Eabani/Aristotle in large pictures had now closed behind us. He presents to the souls present the shocking images of the past, of the fire of Ephesus and the fire of the first Goetheanum on 31 December of the previous year, and thus closes the cycle of evening lectures. On 1 January, our view will be turned the opposite way and directed to the present and the future. We stand on the threshold; Rudolf Steiner shows us the Guardian of the Threshold and the abyss before which the entirety of our outer civilization stands, and directs our view to the outer world into which we are now to deploy the life forces and impulses of anthroposophy from the powers of the Foundation Stone of the heart.

There is a special night between New Year's Eve and New Year's Day that can be experienced as a moment of holding one's breath, as a time-space *between* the 7 and 5 days and nights, as if time had become space and enabled an increased alertness. The "13th Night" can lead us to the thirteenth, surrounded by the twelvefoldness of the leaders of mankind, to the Great Guardian, to the Christ. And as if "enriched" by our higher self, we return to life with new impulses and powers.

⁵ GA 260, 24 December 1924, Opening lecture of the Christmas Conference by Rudolf Steiner. English translation by J. Collis (SteinerBooks, 1990).

⁶ GA 266/I, p. 118.

⁷ GA 266/I, p. 285.

⁸ GA 266/III, p. 344.

⁹ GA 266/III, p.434.

During this night "between the years," it is possible to experience oneself as if standing in a column of light that reaches from the deepest depths to the highest heights. A poem by Friedrich Schiller seems to testify to a similar experience:

"Zenith and Nadir

Wherever you walk in space, your Zenith and Nadir will link you to heaven, to the axis of the world.

However you act within yourself, your will shall touch the heavens, through the axis of the world shall go the direction of your deeds."

Especially out in nature, under the starry sky, one can experience how the multitude of heavenly hosts ascend and descend in the midst of the space filled with spiritual light, and how, "with wings laden with the fragrance of blessing" they want to bestow grace upon humanity and the earth with the thoughts of gods.¹⁰ It is as if, during winter time, the whole earth is like the "resting head"; its soul, "unlocks world thoughts from out of the grounds of eternity." From the "spirit-beholding, in stillness of thought," which we can carry out in communion with the earth, we reach the sphere "where the eternal aims of Gods / World-Beings-Light / on thine own 'I' bestow / for thy free willing."¹¹

Rudolf Steiner spoke to Herbert Hahn about this special night:

"The 12 Holy Nights are decisive for the life and fate of the entire coming year. A good seed of our will can be sown during this time. What is particularly crucial are the resolutions we make on New Year's Eve. On New Year's Eve, the Folk Spirit releases us for a few moments. What we think then is seized upon by the highest hierarchies – and it carries the power of realization within it."

What spoke to us from the cosmos on St. John's Day as the historical conscience from Uriel's point of view now works through the depths of the earth, through the "midnight sun" into one's own innermost soul and shows itself in "good will."

But what is good will in reality? Herbert Hahn adds:

"For the occultist, will means to act out of the spirit, to place oneself in harmony with the hierarchies through meditation. Restless action, action that is moreover not in harmony with the intentions of Rudolf Steiner or the spiritual world, as has happened again and again, has nothing to do with will in this sense."¹²

"Nothing but devotion to the spiritual world can make a work in the world fruitful."¹³

Eva Lohmann-Heck

¹⁰ From the Faust Monologue, Faust I, J. W. Goethe.

¹¹ "The Foundation Stone," GA 260, Rudolf Steiner Press, 2011 (translation adapted).

¹² Gerhard von Beckerath „Der Leidensweg Rudolf Steiners," p. 192.

¹³ GA 265, p. 127.

Editorial

Dear friends,

This Christmas edition of the Newsletter contains, in addition to an introduction by Eva Lohmann-Heck to the Christmas period and the special time "between the years", contributions concerning the historical and current situation of the General Anthroposophical Society. It has turned out to be a lot of reading material and in the - hopefully fairly quiet - days there will be rather more time for reading than usual.

I would like to draw your attention to the 3rd volume on the rehabilitation of Ita Wegman entitled "Contradiction", which has just been published by the Ita Wegman Institute (page 9), although this book is only available in German. This publication seems significant to me in at least two aspects: On the one hand it becomes clear that in 1935 there were also a great many prudent voices, voices with integrity who did not agree with the expulsions at the General Assembly at all, but although they formulated this quite clearly, a publication in the newsletter was completely unthinkable and these voices thus remained more or less ineffective. It is important for us to know that these voices did exist. On the other hand, however, it can also become clear, and this is the second aspect, that these mostly individual voices could not reach a public ear and thus had no impact on the course of events or any developments. The same certainly also applies to subsequent conflicts up to the present situation. Thus, as a result of this publication, I am also faced with the question to us as to whether today any "contradiction", which is lodged by members against certain decisions and developments at the Goetheanum, is sufficiently noted - and, if justified, can also become effective. Otherwise we would have to fear that future generations would find similar letters in the archives of the Society from our time as well, which also remained unheard and thus ineffective.

In addition to the reference to the book, two letters from the book are reproduced in this newsletter with the kind permission of the publishing house of the Ita Wegman Institute.

Despite all justified concern about current affairs, we wish you all a reflective Christmas period and a fruitful and inspiring time "between the years", the time of the holy nights, so that we can meet the upcoming tasks and challenges in a courageous and beneficial manner.

Thomas Heck und Eva Lohmann-Heck

An aphoristic fragment on the history of the Anthroposophical Society

After the first Goetheanum had burned down in 1922/23, Rudolf Steiner had clearly and repeatedly remarked on the desolate state of the Anthroposophical Society founded in Cologne in 1913. The year 1923 was marked by the fact that he severely reduced his public lecture activities and focused above all on the consolidation of the Society. On several occasions he had seriously considered turning away from the Society altogether due to the situation therein, which was characterized by the fact that an "inner opposition" (see below)²⁰ had arisen against him and the members had not taken up his impulses anywhere near sufficiently²⁶. He contemplated continuing to work in a small circle, a kind of congregation or fraternity instead.

Today we have little awareness of the condition of the Anthroposophical Society in 1923 and what this meant for Rudolf Steiner¹⁴. The following small selection of quotations shows this quite clearly:

*"But it [the Society] will certainly disintegrate if, now that it is also rebuilding the Goetheanum on top of all the other external reasons it already has, if the consciousness of which I have spoken in these lectures does not develop [GA 258], if this self-reflection is not there. But then, when it disintegrates, it will disintegrate very quickly. Yet that depends entirely on the will of those who are within the Anthroposophical Society. Anthroposophy will certainly not disappear from the face of the earth. It could however sink back into a latent state for decades or longer, I would say, and then be taken up again later. That would however mean a monstrous loss for the development of mankind."*¹⁵

Rudolf Steiner expressed himself particularly clearly when addressing the leading officials of the Society¹⁶: *"This Society is in decay"*¹⁷, *"It cannot go on like this"*,¹⁸ *"The Anthroposophical Society is riddled with ahrimanic holes everywhere"*¹⁹ and *"My dear friends, I have often said ... that there is an inner opposition within the Anthroposophical Society to what I sometimes have to represent from the centre of Anthroposophy."*²⁰

From letters Rudolf Steiner wrote to Edith Maryon:

"... For the Society I actually only have one thing to say, which is that I would like nothing more to do with it. Everything its board does disgusts me".²¹

¹⁴ Those who would like to get an idea of Rudolf Steiner's suffering with the Anthroposophical Society can be referred to the very extensive but also sobering compilation of quotations and traditions by Gerhard Beckerath "Der Leidensweg Rudolf Steiners", Dornach 2014. In German language only.

¹⁵ GA 258, 1981, p. 170, „Die Geschichte und die Bedingungen der anthroposophischen Bewegung im Verhältnis zur Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft“.

¹⁶ GA 259, 1991.

¹⁷ GA 259, p. 223.

¹⁸ GA 259, p. 213.

¹⁹ GA 259, p. 302.

²⁰ GA 259, p. 152.

²¹ GA 263/1990, p. 117.

"... Here the A.S. sleeps on, it cannot be awakened".²²

"... in the Society things are unbelievably terrible. From all corners come the impossibilities".²³

"... Everything else went well, with the important exception however, that our Viennese members are also sleeping".²⁴

*"It just seems that everything in the anthrop. Soc. is also heading towards chaos after all. ... the Society is in a frightful condition here as well, in disagreement, inadequacy, etc."*²⁵

F. W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven reports about a conversation with Rudolf Steiner:

*"How heavily these worries weighed on Rudolf Steiner's soul emerged from a conversation from 17 November 1923, on the eve of the formation of the Anthroposophical Society in Holland, when he expressed his doubts as to whether it was even possible to continue with the Society as such. He complained that no one seemed to understand what he actually wanted and that it might perhaps be necessary to continue working with a very small number of people within a strict community."*²⁶

Rudolf Steiner on 23 December 1923, on the eve of the Christmas Conference:

*"It is undisputable that at present things must be taken very, very seriously, bitterly seriously indeed. Otherwise it would have to come to what I have often talked about, namely that I would have to withdraw from the Anthroposophical Society."*²⁷

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²² GA 263, p. 121.

²³ GA 263, p. 126.

²⁴ GA 263, p. 163.

²⁵ GA 263, p. 165.

²⁶ Dr. F. W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven: Entwicklung und Geisteskampf 1923-1935, Den Haag, 1935.

²⁷ GA 232, 1998, p. 234.

It was not until 17 November 1923 in The Hague that the final decision was made in favour of the Christmas Conference and the new foundation of the Society; Ita Wegman had asked the decisive question. Rudolf Steiner wrote to Marie Steiner: *Regarding the success of the Society, I am, to a certain extent, placing my last hope in the Christmas meeting.*"²⁸

He was the sole driving force behind the foundation of the new society and the School of Spiritual Science, it was his initiative; he himself took over the chairmanship and had the founding assembly put the Executive Council, which he himself had proposed, by his side in the hope of being able to realize his intentions:

"It was only under these conditions that I could bring myself to take over the chairmanship and to ask this Society at the Dornach Christmas Conference to place by my side the Executive Council with which I am able to believe that I can carry out my intentions."^{29,30}

The esoteric significance of the Executive Council resulted solely from the fact that it was Rudolf Steiner who was Chairman of the Executive Council. This esoteric significance did not arise from the office itself. With regard to the assumption of the chairmanship in the Society, he repeatedly points out that he *had* to do so.³¹

Gerhard v. Beckerath describes the situation before the Christmas Conference as follows:³²

"1. All Rudolf Steiner's endless attempts to educate the Society to become a suitable independent instrument for the anthroposophical (spiritually-mental) movement had failed. The Society was at its end. There was therefore a complete lack of any prerequisites for the resumption of any esoteric work in an esoteric school from its roots.

2. He too had reached an impasse. The fight for the Society and the additionally imposed, intensified fight with the opponents were incompatible with his spiritual research. Further, gruelling strain on his strength in a hopeless situation would soon have put an end to his life.

*3. He had to try to bring about a completely new situation with the prospect of a turn for the better. During some difficult moments of failure by the Society in such an ugly battle fought by the opponents he tended, as Marie Steiner reported, "to continue the movement without the Society". "I am being held responsible for all the mistakes of the Society and the [spiritual anthroposophical] movement is suffering as a result".*³³

The takeover of the leadership entailed a major risk, as was explained in Paris:

"What was taken over at Christmas was, in a sense, a gamble. For there was a certain eventuality: that perhaps - by bringing the leadership of the Anthroposophical Society directly together with the representation of spiritual wisdom - those spiritual powers that lead the anthroposophical movement in the spiritual world could have withdrawn their hands. It may be said that this was not the case, but rather the opposite: with a greater grace, with a higher benevolence, these spiritual powers approach that which flows through the anthroposophical movement."

His decision had been accepted by the spiritual world, but it was important that the impulses were taken up by the members:

*"There is also a promise in a certain sense to the spiritual world. This promise will be fulfilled in an unbreakable way, and it will be shown that in future, things will happen as they were promised to the spiritual world. So that not only the anthroposophical movement, but also the Anthroposophical Society has a responsibility to the Executive Council".*³⁴

The promise to the spiritual world, for which Rudolf Steiner had assumed responsibility with his Karma, could, however, only be fulfilled by the members: *"So that ... the Anthroposophical Society too has a responsibility to the Executive Council."* This responsibility existed vis-à-vis Rudolf Steiner, the members were ultimately unable to bear it.

But the situation after the Christmas conference also included

*"the fact that - I mean from a spiritual aspect - very strong opposing powers, demonic powers, are also attacking the anthroposophical movement."*³⁵

Rudolf Steiner clearly points out that the Christmas Conference was not a conference like any other:

*"If this Christmas Conference is only seen in the way that earlier conferences were so gladly seen then it will gradually evaporate, then it will lose its content, and it would have been better if the gathering had not taken place at all."*³⁶

One should realize the clarity and ramifications of this statement! We will come back to the question of how Anthroposophy and Rudolf Steiner's work might have developed if *the gathering had not taken place.*

It happened as feared: Rudolf Steiner's impulses were hardly ever taken up and he was instead paralyzed by the personal needs of the members.

²⁸ GA 259, 1991, p. 865. From a letter by Rudolf Steiner to Marie Steiner.

²⁹ Highlighting, also in the following quotations by Rudolf Steiner, was added by the author.

³⁰ Rudolf Steiner, Prag, 29. März 1924, GA 260a, 1987, p.183.

³¹ GA 260a, p. 113, 248, 263 .

³² Gerhard von Beckerath, see above, ibid, p. 203

³³ GA 264/1996, p. 470.

³⁴ GA 260a, 1994, p. 335, and GA 240, 1992, p. 143, 18 July 1924, Arnheim.

³⁵ GA 260a, 1994, p. 236, 23 May 1924, Paris.

³⁶ GA 260a, 1987, p. 92.

Rudolf Steiner to Ehrenfried Pfeiffer in the spring of 1924:

"One of the main reasons my impulses don't come to fruition is because the members can't listen to what I say but rather want to express themselves; and above all, they don't want to accept the people through whom I have to work because of karma.... If only two would stand by me, I believe I could fulfil my mission."³⁷

Rudolf Steiner in the newsletter of 19 October 1924:

"While I had been able to meet the challenges of the actual course activities, which had been so very extensive in the last few months, I had to stretch myself to the limits in terms of my physical activity because of the exceedingly large demands that came from the membership in addition to those course activities. ... One doesn't often think about the disastrous consequences that an externally induced excessive demand on time can have on someone who is engaged in spirit-borne activity ... But at the end of the day, everything must be understood in terms of fate (karma)."

Andrej Belyj:

"He himself repeatedly told us that what exhausted him most of all were the many private meetings. The gatekeeper count 400 visitors at a time when he gave four lectures a day ..."³⁸

Marie Steiner:

"We know that not everything could be carried out as Dr Steiner intended. First of all, the overwhelming onslaught by the members was too strong; in order to deal with all the needs of the souls that were brought to him, some of his own intentions had to be postponed to a later time. Then - death intervened."³⁹

A statement by Guenther Wachsmuth, handed down by Marie Steiner, shows how immature the members were and how unrealistic the assessment of this was even by a member of the Executive Council:

"Dr G. W. manages to attribute to the maturity of the mature society that Dr Steiner would thus have found the possibility to connect with it karmically in a very personal way."⁴⁰

Marie Steiner described her impressions of the Christmas Conference and the Society founded there in a letter:

"Instead of creating a new tool for his spiritual work [the International Anthroposophical Society], as he had previously considered to do, he decided to make the sacrifice of his own person. He decided to combine his karma with that of the Society, whereas earlier he had tried to put it on its own feet, as it were, and to educate it towards independ-

ence by advising it in his capacity as a spiritual teacher. Now he saw that the Society had not yet reached this stage of maturity and took the Chairmanship."

Marie Steiner summarized:

"We have experienced what this sacrifice meant: He has brought down a vastly immense abundance of spiritual revelations, which he has paid for with his physical death."⁴¹

Just as in the Society founded in Cologne in 1913, the members were barely able to take up Rudolf Steiner's impulses in this re-foundation; the esoteric thread which he regarded as necessary and which should have run through the Society did not materialise, the promise was not kept. And so, after nine months working in the Society, Rudolf Steiner was not able to continue, he had not been able to realize his intentions as he had hoped and at best only rudimentarily. Obviously the 4 x 12 people⁴² who should have been recognized by him could not show themselves. Further work was not possible.

Historically and also at present, the members of the Society have largely been under the impression that Rudolf Steiner's decision to hold the Christmas Conference and to found a new Society was in any case a good and correct one, because without his decision there would be no Christmas Conference, no Foundation Stone, no Foundation Stone Meditation, no Laying of the Foundation Stone or any Class Lessons, nor the rich revelations and messages that followed in the aftermath of the Christmas Conference. All this has become reality, we know that.

But what if Rudolf Steiner had actually withdrawn from the Anthroposophical Society?

How would the Society have developed if Rudolf Steiner had actually withdrawn from it? He would certainly have endeavoured to continue fulfilling his objective and his mission and would have carried on working towards these aims. He might well have continued his work for much longer, possibly into the thirties or even forties, when Christ was supposed to appear in the etheric. And might the continuation of his work for several more years have led to further and perhaps even more extensive revelations and messages being produced, orally and in writing? Rudolf Steiner would certainly have remained faithful to his objective and his mission, to the people, anthroposophy and the "projects" he had begun, such as medicine, curative education, eurythmy, speech formation, the natural sciences and agriculture. The publishing house managed by Marie Steiner would certainly not have been abandoned either. After all, it was not the actual anthroposophical work, the research in the spiritual field and the lectures that exhausted him: *"These lectures keep me healthy,"* he said, *"What makes me tired are the dead thoughts that I am confronted with, it is the ignorance, the incomprehension of the people that paralyzes me."⁴³* Rudolf

³⁷ Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, *Ein Leben für den Geist*, 2000 p.131.

³⁸ Andrej Belyj, *Verwandeln des Lebens*, 1977, p. 61.

³⁹ Rudolf Steiner: *Die Konstitution der Freien Hochschule für Geisteswissenschaft. Ihre Gliederung in Sektionen*. Verlag der Rudolf Steiner Nachlassverwaltung, Dornach, 1957. From the preface by Marie Steiner.

⁴⁰ Marie Steiner in her letter to Richard Dürich from 3 September 1947 in *«Briefe und Dokumente»*, Dornach 1981, p. 330.

⁴¹ GA 260a, p. 863).

⁴² Last speech on 28 September 1924, GA 238.

⁴³ Ita Wegman: *An die Mitglieder*, Newsletter 4 October 1925.

Steiner's withdrawal would not have simply led to the dissolution of the existing anthroposophical institutions and groups such as the national societies, the branches and the Christian Community. All of this could have continued to develop nonetheless and the interest in Anthroposophy and the people involved and active in it would undoubtedly have carried on. This applies particularly those who were already enthusiastically committed to Anthroposophy, such as the teaching staff at the Waldorf School in Stuttgart. The founding of the Waldorf School was not a fruit of the Anthroposophical Society and Waldorf Education consequently developed independently from the Goetheanum. Assuming that Rudolf Steiner could have worked for many more years, the World School Association could also have come into being (which was then actually prevented by A. Steffen!) and with his participation, a further dissemination of Waldorf Education would have been possible. The clinic in Arlesheim would certainly have continued to exist and anthroposophical medicine would probably have been developed and disseminated much further in cooperation with Ita Wegman than was possible after the Christmas Conference. The decision for the agricultural course had already been made before the Christmas Conference and the contact to Koberwitz had existed since 1922. Rudolf Steiner would have continued to be involved and give impulses in this matter as well. The further development of eurythmy and speech formation was not dependent on the Society; the public success of the extensive tours Marie Steiner carried out was quite obviously not dependent on the context of the Society. Had Rudolf Steiner been free from the burden of the Society, he would also have carried on giving his impulses to the areas of curative education, natural sciences, etc., since he would thus have been able to continue working with those committed individuals who took up his thoughts and were successful in their efforts. Just think of personalities like Carl Unger, Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz, Daniel Dunlop, Walter Johannes Stein, Lili and Eugen Kolisko, Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, Willem Zeylmans van Emmichoven, Albrecht Strohschein, Siegfried Pickert, Karl König as well as many more and of course also Marie Steiner, Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede. After the expulsions of 1935, most of the above-mentioned personalities could no longer work in connection with the Society and the School of Spiritual Science.

Large projects, such as the research task outlined on 31 December 1923 to develop an anthroposophical methodology that could have led to an "overall scientific view" and according to Rudolf Steiner would have cost an estimated 50 - 75 million Swiss Francs to realise⁴⁴, would certainly have required a very broad societal context. Rudolf Steiner must have considered such a project to be fundamentally feasible at the Christmas Conference, otherwise he would not have spoken of it. However, the developments which followed did not permit such a project and it fell "into oblivion". It can certainly be assumed that the esoteric work would also have been restarted vigorously since he had not been able to re-

sume it in 1918 after the war due to the difficult situation in the Society.⁴⁵ Many other things would also have been possible. We cannot estimate what effect further work along these lines might have had on political developments in Europe; here, too, different courses of history would be quite conceivable. For one can certainly assume that the problematic development in the General Anthroposophical Society after 1925 had rather benefited other developments, especially in Germany.

It is hardly possible to imagine all the fruits Rudolf Steiner's work could have borne if he had been able to continue working for another 10 or 20 years.

It is remarkable that these questions and these possibilities are hardly taken into consideration and that it is in a way assumed a priori that there was no alternative to the actual development.

What actually happened next

As already mentioned, Rudolf Steiner had founded the Society with this Executive Council in the hope of being able to realize "his intentions", his mission in connection with Michael, the Spirit of the Age. The statutes did not include any provisions on how the board should be expanded or elected. This is very unusual, but was certainly not an omission on Rudolf Steiner's part. Without such a regulation, Swiss law would have applied⁴⁶, which can hardly have been Rudolf Steiner's intention and it must therefore be assumed that at least initially, an expansion of the Executive Council or a succession *was not intended* for this newly founded Society. With regard to the School of Spiritual Science, it was mentioned in the statutes that a possible successor could only have been appointed by Rudolf Steiner. This was the initial situation after the foundation of the Society and Rudolf Steiner had not expressed his opinion on the succession either for the Society or for the School until shortly before his death. A direct question about the future by Ita Wegman shortly before his death "*was purposely answered [by him] with no*".⁴⁷

What are we to make of this? Was it an oversight? Had he really not considered his death at that time and therefore did not see the need to settle the matter of succession? An omission can most likely be ruled out. Rather, the question should be asked as to whether the way in which the Society was founded and the way in which he had positioned himself at the head of the Society as its esoteric leader made it impossible to continue both the Society and the School of Spiritual Science in the way he had shaped them *without him* due to the development and that such continuation was therefore deliberately not intended? Could an esoteric school have continued in this form without an esoteric teacher? Certainly, the contents of the class lessons were set and available, so that work could

⁴⁵ Further information in GA 266c, 1998, p. 353f.

⁴⁶ According to association law, the executive council would be elected by the membership. Anyone could make suggestions and anybody could also put themselves up for election.

⁴⁷ Ita Wegman, Newsletter No. 17, 26 April 1925.

⁴⁴ GA 260, 1994 p. 210-213f and Roland Tüscher, Anthroposophie neu erschliessen, „Ein Nachrichtenblatt“ No. 19, 30 September 2018.

continue. But to lead the School of Spiritual Science would have required an esoteric appointment which could only have been made by Rudolf Steiner. And also the Society, especially the Executive Council: Was it still esoteric without Rudolf Steiner? Can there be an esoteric leadership as a whole if the members of the leadership do not work together esoterically?⁴⁸ After Rudolf Steiner's death, there was not even an esoteric cooperation among the leadership. Was not and is not the idea of an esoteric Executive Council *after* Rudolf Steiner's death complete fiction?

As far as the School of Spiritual Science is concerned, one has to face a bit of a mystery today if one seriously believes that the School of Spiritual Science, founded by Rudolf Steiner as a "Heavenly Institution"⁴⁹, could simply have been kept running back then and still exist today. This School of Spiritual Science was ultimately an investiture from the spiritual world and a successor could only have been appointed by Rudolf Steiner, which did not happen. Can one really be of the opinion that the Executive Council⁵⁰ could take over the leadership in a spiritually justified way and keep the School going by applying the rules established by Rudolf Steiner to itself and thus declaring itself to be his successor?⁵¹ Could this leadership continue to be claimed, even after Ita Wegman, the only Executive Council member who had been entrusted with School tasks by Rudolf Steiner, had been expelled from the Executive Council by her colleagues on the Executive Council? In more recent times, the Executive Council has at some point delegated the leadership of the School to the Section Leaders, who in turn went on to delegate the leadership of the General Anthroposophical Section back to the Executive Council, and now it is intended that the Goetheanum Leadership (in collaboration with a General Secretary and a Section Leader)⁵² will "inaugurate" a new leadership of the General Anthroposophical Section. Does this not prompt a question as to who gave authority for such "inaugurations" to those who acted then and do so now? Some may believe that what today is called the "School of Spiritual Science" at the Goetheanum is the actual "Heavenly Institution" established by Rudolf Steiner from the spiritual world.

⁴⁸ There were obviously very different backgrounds of experience among the Executive Council members regarding the esoteric as well as the exoteric cooperation with Rudolf Steiner: M. Steiner, I. Wegman and E. Vreede were already closely connected with Rudolf Steiner in the Theosophical Society, were committed to the development of the Society and were esoteric pupils. The situation was quite different with regards to A. Steffen and G. Wachsmuth, both of whom only came to Dornach in 1920 and who until then had had much less of a connection with Rudolf Steiner and the Society within the context of their lives. This is only a fragmentary comment; a real evaluation requires a more detailed treatment and presentation.

⁴⁹ GA 270c, 1999, p. 14.

⁵⁰ This applies only to A. Steffen and G. Wachsmuth. M. Steiner purportedly did not recognize this leadership of the School of Spiritual Science, at least not later on, and I. Wegman and E. Vreede were excluded from the board - and thus also from the School of Spiritual Science - before this question arose and corresponding claims were made.

⁵¹ It should be remembered that the unified form for all class lessons as they are held today was only introduced after Rudolf Steiner's death. This also applies to reading aloud and the lecturing system itself. See also: Johannes Kiersch, „Steiners individualisierte Esoterik einst und jetzt“, 2012.

⁵² See "Fourth letter to members (mid-June)", AWE 7-8/18.

However, this belief will not be able to stand up to the scrutiny of an unbiased effort to arrive at knowledge and insight, neither in relation to the historical nor to the present facts. The author is convinced that in a School of Spiritual Science today, free interaction with the contents that have been handed down is only possible without a centralistic and dogmatic leadership.^{53,54} With regard to the Society, in addition to the question of whether the Society founded at Christmas 1923 may have ceased to exist with Rudolf Steiner's death or lost its basis of existence, it is necessary to also look at the development of the Constitution. Thus the "Anthroposophical Society" was founded at the Christmas Conference, and on 8 February 1925, the "Bauverein" ("Verein am Goetheanum freie Hochschule für Geisteswissenschaft", originally founded in 1913 as "Johannesbau Verein") was to be renamed as the management society "Allgemeine Anthroposophische Gesellschaft" in accordance with Rudolf Steiner's intention, and the administration of the "Anthroposophische Gesellschaft" (Weihnachtstagungs-Gesellschaft⁵⁵) and the Goetheanum, as well as the clinic and the publishing house, were to be integrated as subdivisions with complete legal independence in each case. Since Rudolf Steiner, though able to prepare the necessary procedures, was then unable to carry them out in person due to illness, he had obviously entrusted Guenther Wachsmuth with the task. Mistakenly however, one was obviously of the opinion that this process was intended to integrate the "Bauverein" into the Christmas Conference Society and, accordingly, the oral hearing took place on 8 February 1925.⁵⁶ This misunderstanding was not recognized though, which meant that no one apart from the notary really understood how Rudolf Steiner wanted to implement the unified constitution, not even any of the members of the Executive Council. On 22 March 1925, a report appeared in the newsletter giving the erroneous impression that on 8 February 1925, the "Bauverein", the clinic and the publishing house *had been integrated into the Christmas Conference Society*. This announcement essentially consisted of a speech given by Rudolf Steiner on 29 June 1924 at an extraordinary general meeting of the "Bauverein", the content of which had however been altered, in fact one must say, "manipulated", in such a way that all references and names referring to the "Bauverein" had been removed. Both an accidental

⁵³ For example, new members of the Executive Council belong to the leadership of the School of Spiritual Science even if they have not previously been a member of this School and they can hold class lessons themselves after a relatively short period of membership.

⁵⁴ Appropriate handling of the contents of the School of Spiritual Science could probably have taken place within the framework of an intellectual brotherhood without claims to power. See also: GA 54, lecture of 23 November 1905.

⁵⁵ The term "Weihnachtstagungs-Gesellschaft" (Christmas Conference Society) is an auxiliary term used to distinguish more clearly between the "Anthroposophical Society" founded at the 1923 Christmas Conference and the renamed Bauverein "Allgemeine Anthroposophische Gesellschaft" (General Anthroposophical Society), which was founded in 1913 as Johannesbau Verein. On the question of names see: "Ein Nachrichtenblatt" No. 3, 2017, 5 February 2017 or <http://gv-2018.com/name-wtg/>. In German language only.

⁵⁶ Diary entry by Albert Steffen, 9 February 1925 (GA 260a, 1991, p. 22) as well as the report by Hans Locher who had participated in the meeting, in "Mitteilungen aus der anthroposophischen Bewegung", No. 68, 1980.

alteration of this text and the assumption that Rudolf Steiner himself had made these misleading changes can be excluded.⁵⁷ The report was not marked by name, only signed with "Executive Council of the General Anthroposophical Society."⁵⁸ Rudolf Steiner himself could only have noticed the resulting misunderstanding or error on reading this publication. It is very likely that he had noticed it, either while still at the proofs stage or in the printed newsletter. None of the other participants had noticed this error or had asked Rudolf Steiner about it. Basically, with this misunderstanding or error and above all with the incomprehension of *the closest co-workers in Rudolf Steiner's immediate circle*, the Christmas Conference Society was destroyed as the basis for Rudolf Steiner's further work. He himself did not correct anything. Why this did not happen must remain unanswered. It is possible that he could not correct anything on his own initiative, which to some extent was characteristic of his work: it may be that he had to wait until he was asked before he could act. He was not asked. A few days later, on 30 March 1925, Rudolf Steiner's life on earth ended.

There is no knowledge of any conclusive judgement on the development after the Christmas Conference given by Rudolf Steiner and it is likely that no such judgement exists either. But what might his verdict have been? Is it not to likely that this would not have been any more favourable than his assessment of the societal situation before the Christmas meeting? Had anything at all changed in the membership? Had Rudolf Steiner's impulses now been taken up sufficiently? Shouldn't there have been a rich stream of initiatives from the membership? Individuals have certainly recognized what was necessary and have acted accordingly. Yet that had already been the case before the Christmas Conference.

Is it not time for us to finally come to terms with the history and development of the Society, to penetrate and understand it in an open and unbiased way, and thereby also to clarify the basis of today's situation? Without this self-knowledge in relation to the history of the Society, can we really claim that the General Anthroposophical Society is an epistemological society? Without such realisations and in ignorance of the errors, mistakes and illusions we live with, a renewal of the Christmas Conference impulse for the secular return of the Christmas Conference in 2023/2024 and fruitful work in terms of a contribution to civilization for the future of humanity by the General Anthroposophical Society will hardly be possible.

Thomas Heck

⁵⁷ It was not possible to recognize the deviation of the statement from 22 March 1925 (today in GA260a, 1987, p. 567ff) from the original text of the speech from 29 June 1924 (GA 260a, 1987, p. 501ff) because the speech of 29 June 1924 was first published only in 1966. An annotated text comparison can be found in Rudolf Saacke: "Die Formfrage der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft und die innere Opposition gegen Rudolf Steiner", 2000, from page 127 onwards, also available in PDF format under http://fvn-rs.net/PDF/andere/Saacke_DieFormfrage.PDF. In German language only.

⁵⁸ This "misinformation" can be regarded as the beginning of a misleading reporting style, the one-sidedness of which increased with the rise in corporate conflicts and which still exists today.

Perspectives and questions on membership in the Christmas Conference Society

In the article "Myths regarding the constitutional question: 'Amalgamation through implied action'"⁵⁹ it was pointed out that there are no sufficient epistemological foundations for the assumption repeatedly made by the leadership of the Society that the General Anthroposophical Society was founded at the Christmas Conference and that this assertion therefore does not correspond to the facts. The essential aspects leading to this conclusion are as follows:

- The society founded at the Christmas Conference was called "Anthroposophical Society".⁶⁰
- The "General Anthroposophical Society" is the "Bauverein", which was founded in 1913 and renamed on 8 February 1925.
- There is no evidence of an amalgamation of the two entities and, according to the current state of knowledge, an amalgamation cannot have taken place, even by implied action.

Since the view that the General Anthroposophical Society is the Christmas Conference Society has not only been cultivated by the leadership of the Society for decades - since 22 March 1925 to be precise - but has also been defended (by all possible means, so to speak⁶¹), and the majority of the membership has gladly followed this view, it will not be in any way easy or straightforward to discard this view - which is actually pure fiction - and to accept the true state of affairs.

On an earthly, legal and social basis, the continuity of the Christmas Conference Society cannot be supported. At best, one may refer to the fact that there has been a "continuous social stream" within the membership from the time of the Christmas Conference until today which held the "belief" that the General Anthroposophical Society was the Christmas Conference Society. Out of this "heritage of belief", with reference to the Christmas Conference and the continuity of an esoteric Executive Council which was asserted and believed to be legal (until the 1990s), the latter then acted in the societal conflicts, also with reference to the Christmas Conference. What is easily overlooked however is the fact that this is claim applies to Albert Steffen and Guenther Wachsmuth, but not to Ita Wegman, Elisabeth Vreede and Marie Steiner, as these three were all ostracized from their work in the Society by this "esoteric Executive Council". A further example of the work of this "stream" with reference to the Christmas Conference is the denial of the existence of numerous editions of Rudolf Steiner's Complete Edition

⁵⁹ Ein Nachrichtenblatt Nr. 22, 18 November 2018

⁶⁰ Ein Nachrichtenblatt Nr. 3, 2017, 5 February 2017 or <http://gv-2018.com/name-wtg/>

⁶¹ In the 1960s, members were excluded because they asked questions on the matter and numerous articles by the Leadership of the Society which have been appearing until the end of the 1990s already contained obvious false representations even then, which to date still have not been rectified.

(Gesamtausgabe) at the Goetheanum for more than 20 years or so. Not forgetting the expulsion of Rudolf Steiner's important pupils and entire national societies (Holland and England) at the 1935 General Assembly. These and other important events and conflicts have not yet been delved into and processed on a societal level in order to gain understanding. Whether or not this is a useful basis for continuing to believe that membership in the General Anthroposophical Society is virtually automatically linked to the impulses of the Christmas Conference shall be left to individual judgment. In the text below, only further questions are to be asked in this context, even though it may well be evident how the author himself would answer them.

For many, membership of the Christmas Conference Society will undoubtedly be important and for some this may have been the reason to join the Society in the first place. One can and should therefore now ask oneself what consequences would follow if the continuity to the Christmas Conference Society did not actually exist and one therefore found oneself in an illusion. Important cognitive questions may follow, whereby living with these questions could initially be more fruitful than the endeavour to find answers as quickly as possible.

- What would change if one realized that the General Anthroposophical Society does not correspond to the Christmas Conference Society? If one felt a loss, what exactly would this loss be? What could one only achieve as a member of the Christmas Conference Society (for Anthroposophy, for the world, for society, for oneself) that would not be possible for a non-member and would also not be accessible or affordable to people or groups outside the Society? Is it really necessary to be a member of the Christmas Conference Society in order to be able to follow its impulses, Anthroposophy and Rudolf Steiner's impulses? Would it not be necessary to obtain precise clarification as to what exactly the "impulse of the Christmas Conference" actually means? One could, for example, try to formulate what it was about *this impulse* that went beyond the impulses on which Rudolf Steiner's work for the formation of the Society before the Christmas Conference was based? One could or should also clarify what would have happened if the impulse associated with the founding of the Anthroposophical Society in Cologne in 1913 had been taken up by the membership - and the Christmas Conference therefore had not been necessary? (One should not be mistaken here, after the failure of the foundation of the Society in Cologne in 1913 and the futile efforts to consolidate it in 1923, Rudolf Steiner had considered withdrawing from the Anthroposophical Society completely. The final decision to found a new society was made only 6 weeks before the

Christmas Conference, "after a difficult inner struggle"⁶² to make a final attempt, as Rudolf Steiner wrote to Marie Steiner on 1 December 1923: "Because I have, so to speak, put my last hopes for the Society into the Christmas Meeting."⁶³)

"It has been the most powerful attempt of a human educator to lift his contemporaries above their own little selves, to awaken them to a conscious will, to be allowed to become a tool of wise guidance of the world. Yet at the same time this Christmas Conference is linked to infinite tragedy. For one cannot but say: We might well have been called, but not chosen. We were unable to live up to our calling. Subsequent developments have shown this."

"Instead of creating a new tool for his spiritual work [the International Anthroposophical Society], as he had previously considered to do, he decided to make the sacrifice of his own person. He decided to combine his karma with that of the Society, whereas earlier he had tried to put it on its own feet, as it were, and to educate it towards independence by advising it in his capacity as a spiritual teacher. Now he saw that the Society had not yet reached this stage of maturity and took the Chairmanship." Marie Steiner summarized: "We have experienced what this sacrifice meant: He has brought down a vastly immense abundance of spiritual revelations, which he has paid for with his physical death."⁶⁴

- Rudolf Steiner had founded the Society at the Christmas Conference so that he could carry out his work: "It was only under these conditions that I could bring myself to take over the chairmanship and to ask this Society at the Dornach Christmas Conference to place by my side the Executive Council with which I am able to believe that I can carry out my intentions."^{65,66} He thus hoped to be able to realize his intentions. How can we assume today that we can follow on from this, if back then the members were not able to do so sufficiently, even with Rudolf Steiner's help, and he was therefore unable to continue working and living?⁶⁷ What then does it sound like when it is suggested that the Christmas Conference should be

⁶² GA 260, 1994, p. 39

⁶³ GA 262, 2002, p. 361

⁶⁴ Marie Steiner her letter to Richard Dürich from 3 September 1947 in «Briefe und Dokumente», Dornach 1981, p. 333 (Extract, printed in GA 259/1991, S. 863).

⁶⁵ Highlighting, also in the following quotations of Rudolf Steiner, was added by the author.

⁶⁶ Rudolf Steiner, Prag, 29 March 1924, GA 260a, 1987, p.183.

⁶⁷ The way the new format of the Society was shaped or might have been shaped by the members, in free self-determination and following Rudolf Steiner's initiative was outlined by the author in "Die Gestalt der Weihnachtstagungs-Gesellschaft, Teil I" in "Ein Nachrichtenblatt", Nr. 26, 19 December 2016. See also: <http://gv-2018.com/documents/Gestalt-WTG-1u2.pdf>

developed further?⁶⁸ Or that the aim is to "come closer to Rudolf Steiner's intention in founding the School of Spiritual Science"⁶⁹ without explaining what this actually means?

Could it be that if one wanted to connect with the impulse of the Christmas Conference, the School of Spiritual Science and Rudolf Steiner, it would be particularly important that the following prerequisites should be fulfilled or the following questions answered?

- A clear insight or an effort to find out what Rudolf Steiner wanted his work to achieve in relation to the new foundation of the Society and the School of Spiritual Science.
- A clear formation of judgement as to what we can achieve today without Rudolf Steiner and, above all, what is not possible without him.
- A reappraisal and recognition of the history as well as the development since the Christmas Conference and in particular after Rudolf Steiner's death ("Anyone who cannot give an account of the past three thousand years of history remains in darkness, without experience, living from day to day."⁷⁰)
- It must be realized that these are community tasks - but not those of the leadership of an authoritarian society that believes itself to be in succession.
- Ultimately it will be necessary to answer the question whether membership in the General Anthroposophical Society is still helpful today for the common and individual tasks and developmental needs or whether membership is perhaps even a hindrance as long as societal "self-knowledge" and a transformation of practices are not desired.
- Should we not also ask ourselves whether in the context of this society, in its present condition, there can really be a renewal of the impulses in connection with the secular return of the Christmas Conference in 5 years' time?

Thomas Heck

"The most modern society possible..."

From the very beginning of his public work for anthroposophy and the facilitation of new Christian mysteries, Rudolf Steiner felt that it was necessary to have a suitable societal context at his disposal. The old societal contexts, based on authoritative structures and strict rules, in which the mystery events took place, were no longer an appropriate setting for people striving for freedom; they were no longer contemporary. "*We have no right to force authority: [What is needed is] the first community that strives for organization with freedom,*"⁷¹ said Rudolf Steiner at the General Assembly of the German Section of the Theosophical Society in 1906. Since it was no longer possible to work within the context of this Society, the Anthroposophical Society was founded in Cologne in 1913. In contrast to the Theosophical Society, Rudolf Steiner did not take on any leadership tasks in this Society, as he pointed out after the Christmas Conference:

*"When the Anthroposophical Society was founded in 1913, it was a time to really ask the question arising from an occult basic impulse: Will this Anthroposophical Society continue to develop through the strength it had gained from its members up to then? And this could only be ascertained if I myself, who as General Secretary had until then headed the German Section which represented the anthroposophical movement within the Theosophical Society, did not take the leadership of the Anthroposophical Society into my own hands, but wanted to see how this Anthroposophical Society now develops from its own strength."*⁷²

The members could not take up the impulses sufficiently and after the futile effort to consolidate the Society in 1923, Rudolf Steiner had considered withdrawing completely from the Anthroposophical Society.⁷³ It was only shortly before the Christmas Conference that "after a difficult inner struggle"⁷⁴ the final decision was made to found a new Society, a final attempt, as Rudolf Steiner wrote to Marie Steiner on 1 December 1923: "Because I have, so to speak, put my last hopes for the Society into the Christmas meeting."⁷⁵ It was a freely made decision by Rudolf Steiner to take the initiative to found a new Society and also to take over the leadership of the Society once again by taking up the task of first chairman. He alone developed the statutes and determined the structure and form of this new foundation. On the one hand, the appointment of the Executive Council was arranged by him, he himself described this as an "appointment of the Executive Council which was handled somewhat aristocratically."⁷⁶

However, the actual appointment of the Executive Council and the formation of the Society are dependent on the agreement of the members. The initiative is entirely down to Rudolf Stei-

⁶⁸ Paul Mackay, "Anthroposophy Worldwide" 10/15

⁶⁹ "Goetheanum in Development" in AWE 12/17

⁷⁰ Goethe, West-östlicher Divan.

⁷¹ Quoted from Hella Wiesberger, GA 259, 1991, p. 843

⁷² GA 260a, 1987, S. 204, highlighting by Thomas Heck

⁷³ e.g. in Dr F. W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven: *Entwicklung und Geisteskampf 1923-1935*, Den Haag, 1935 or GA 232, 1998, p. 234.

⁷⁴ GA 260, 1994, p. 39

⁷⁵ GA 262, 2002, p. 361

⁷⁶ GA 260, 1994, p. 82

ner, the free deed of a human being on the one hand, but at the same time an esoteric process and an esoteric act of an initiate on the other hand, following the impulses of the spiritual world in order to enable once again a connection between the spiritual world and human beings. Basically a contradictory, completely new undertaking demanded by the times: A synthesis of the strictly hierarchical order of the spiritual world and the requirements of an organization determined by the members themselves which takes into account people's development towards freedom. This synthesis cannot be based exclusively on an existing legal framework; it requires a free relationship of trust that precludes either the aristocratic or the democratic principle from becoming prevalent. Rudolf Steiner on 25 December 1923 during the discussion of the Statutes:

*"Well, I mean, in practice, there won't be such a big difference between democracy and aristocracy. We could put the matter to the test in the next few days and ask whether the Executive Council I proposed will be elected or not. Then we would also have a democratic condition, because I assume that it will be elected, otherwise I myself would resign again! Obviously, there must be freedom. But, my dear friends, I too must have freedom. I cannot have anything imposed on me. Above all, the person who is to hold the office must also have freedom."*⁷⁷

Rudolf Steiner's freedom is based on the fact that he would resign if the Executive Council proposed by him was not supported by the members or if the relationship of trust was impaired in any other way.

The Articles of Association of this Society

*"...are geared towards the purely human. They are not linked to principles, they are not linked to dogmas, but in these statutes something is said that is purely tied to the actual and the human, my dear friends."*⁷⁸

Rudolf Steiner presents his initiative freely to the assembled members, involves them by inviting an intensive discussion of the statutes and by answering questions, he explains every formulation in great detail and justifies to the members every decision regarding the Executive Council members and the Section Leaders. The whole lengthy process enabled the members to fully and consciously penetrate and be able to support every step.

The appointment of the Executive Council is then confirmed by the members:

*"Then I would ask you, not by voting in the same way as previous votes were executed, but with the feeling that you agree with this basic character of the leadership of a real Anthroposophical Society, and I ask you to give your approval to the fact that this Executive Council will be formed here for the leadership of the Anthroposophical Society."*⁷⁹

The statutes as a whole were also approved by the assembled members on 28 December 1923.

The members thus formed this new form of society in free self-determination according to Rudolf Steiner's initiative. It united the aristocratic-esoteric principle of the initiative "from the top down" from the spiritual world with the earthly-democratic principle, here the confirmation of the reality created by consent "from the bottom up". Thus the most modern society possible is created - *"for the most modern society should be the Anthroposophical Society which is being founded here"*.⁸⁰

This structure will only be able to survive if it can shape "life" out of mutual trust from the consciousness of this special structure, beyond legal claims.

"One should realise that the Anthroposophical Society has actually acquired an esoteric character; it is basically no longer an association like others, but rather something that wants to practice anthroposophy itself. It will only be able to do this if this concept is really understood everywhere. For Anthroposophy can only really work in full freedom if this work is always met with understanding everywhere. Anthroposophical acts cannot be acts from above, although they must be acts which are led by initiative. That is why we emphasized so strongly at the Dornach conference that the Executive Council formed there wants to be an initiative Executive Council, not an administrative council. We will therefore have to look at what it does because it comes up with something, because it has thoughts and ideas regarding its work, because it is an initiative council. And as such one will have to regard it as a kind of real esoteric centre of the anthroposophical movement. To a much greater degree than has been the case so far, anthroposophical movement and anthroposophical society will have to be determined. They will be one and the same. It was only under these conditions that I was able to decide to take over the chairmanship and ask this Society at the Christmas Conference in Dornach to put by my side the Executive Council with which I can believe that I can carry out my intentions".⁸¹

The following picture can be formed from Rudolf Steiner's representations: The actual formation of the Society takes place in the middle, it is a living process, in a trusting cooperation whereby the spiritual impulses are seized by the members and they strive for the connection to the spiritual world. Thus a kind of tripartite being arose from this cooperation of Rudolf Steiner's initiative as a representative of the spiritual anthroposophical movement with the members who freely joined this Society. Its centre could only develop as a breathing, pulsating life in trusting cooperation if the members affirmed and realised Rudolf Steiner's intentions in freedom and at the same time brought the individual building stones for the "spiritual Goetheanum" from the surrounding area through their work.

Thus the most modern society possible was created. What ultimately happened to it will be looked at next year . TH

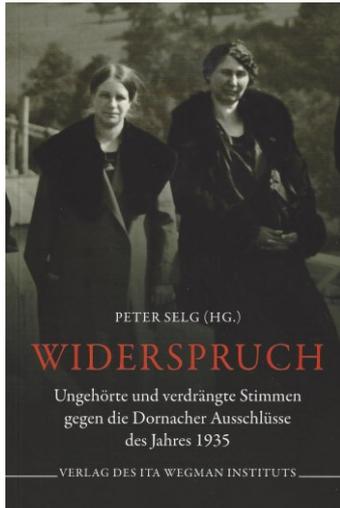
⁷⁷ GA 260, 1994, p. 82f

⁷⁸ GA 260, 1994, p. 41

⁷⁹ GA 260, 1994, p. 162

⁸⁰ GA 260, 1994, p. 125

⁸¹ GA 260a, 1991, p. 182f



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Following the publication of the motions for exclusion in the newsletter of the Anthroposophical Society of 17 March 1935, numerous letters of protest were received in Dornach. People who had formed their own judgments tried to make a stand against something they experienced as an attempt at collective opinion-formation and tendentious reporting - and as the end of the Christmas conference. Getting to know these impressive voices of opposition in a selection is not only historically significant. "I am of the opinion that knowledge of this not insignificant resistance can be helpful for future generations of anthroposophists, especially in their relationship to the Anthroposophical Society and for the dignity of this Society, which in its actual form is not an authoritarian but a liberal one."

(Peter Selg)

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Two Letters from the book

Letter No. 4 from Ernst Surkamp

Ernst Surkamp
Stuttgart-13, 26 March 1935,
Schwabenbergstr. 146, Member No. 2876

Motion on Item 4 of Agenda30

The Ordinary General Assembly of the General Anthroposophical Society of 14 April 1935 shall decide:

The proposal Aisenpreis, Bartsch etc., printed in Newsletter No. 11/12 of 17 March 1935, can only be described as a betrayal of the highest principles of Dr Steiner's life and teaching. It violates the fundamental pillars of anthroposophy, freedom and love, and ultimately means a self-destruction of the Anthroposophical Society. The General Assembly therefore resolutely rejects it.

For the purpose of explanation and justification:

With inner horror I read in the newsletter about the motion by a number of members to hold a heresy trial at the next General Assembly over old members who were accepted by Dr Steiner himself, who enjoyed his trust and were some of his closest co-workers.

Their offence? They have not subjected themselves to the authority of a member of the Executive Council or rather that of the three still active members of the Executive Council!

This claim to authority stands in stark contradiction to the spirit and essence of anthroposophy. The fact that a so-called "will of the Society" is even used to support this authority, which the "accused" are said to have contravened, completely ruins the Anthroposophical Society, whose recent General Assemblies were deplorably far below the level of the former parliaments, and at best makes it a church or sect instead of a community based on freedom, a community of persons striving for spirituality in the sense of Rudolf Steiner.

Spiritual decisions cannot be made by general assemblies, or by parliamentary means. There is a good reason parliamentarianism has been a waste of time all over the world. How can serious decisions of an intellectual nature be put before a "General Assembly"? That would be an outrageous sacrilege. And that is why this parliamentary motion to expel deserving old members because of differences of opinion is the worst mockery of the spirit that has occurred on earth for a long time.

Unfortunately, according to her recent essays, it seems that this motion is still supported by Mrs Marie Steiner. It would be a shocking tragedy if Mrs Marie Steiner, who under great personal sacrifices first gave Rudolf Steiner the opportunity to work, were now to contribute to the destruction of Rudolf Steiner's work by supporting such a motion.

One cannot justify this proposal with the mistakes of the others. We have all failed, and on top of that we have also had to experience the repeated failures of the Executive

Council. The Executive Council could not have fallen apart if the spirit of Rudolf Steiner had remained alive in it. Improvement could only be achieved if everyone looked for guilt in themselves: "mea culpa" instead of a heresy court.

Such a thing, which is imposed upon this part of the Executive Council, would be an egregious irreverence of Dr Steiner himself, a complete apostasy from him and the worst kind of medieval inquisition. We all have to start over again and again. Can't that happen now?

The allegation that these members excluded themselves is simply untenable. These members can only answer the question of whether they consider themselves excluded with "yes" or "no" if asked honestly and directly.

One could just as well say of the signatories of this "parliamentary motion" that they are excluding themselves from the Society by proposing their motion, since they thereby violate the highest principles of Dr Steiner's teachings, namely freedom and love.

Should an exclusion take place, which would mean a complete detachment from Rudolf Steiner, it should obviously be assumed that all contributions towards the building of the Goetheanum will be refunded to those excluded and to all those who stand behind them. It is a curious fact that the Goetheanum could not have been built at all without the in some cases incredibly high subsidies by personalities who are now to be excluded.

Ernst Surkamp



First Goetheanum, Rietmann, 1922

Letter No. 7

Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain

Rudolf Steiner House, 35 Park rd., London, N. W. 1, 29th March, 1935.

OPEN LETTER

to all Members of the General Anthroposophical Society and especially to those Members attending the General Meeting at Dornach on 14th April, 1935.

The Agenda of the forthcoming General Meeting, published in the Nachrichtenblatt of the 17th March, 1935, contains proposals for the exclusion of two members (Dr.

Ita Wegman and Dr. Elizabeth Vreede) from the Vorstand of the General Anthroposophical Society, for the expulsion from the Society of six other members (Messrs.

D. N. Dunlop, George Kaufmann, Dr. F. W. Zeylmans van Emichoven, P. J. de Haan, Jürgen von Grone, Dr. E. Kolisko), and for the severance from the Society of a number of important Groups, among them the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain, represented by the undersigned Executive.

The peculiar wording of these resolutions, which speak of "actions bearing the character of self-exclusion" from the Vorstand, or of persons "having ceased" to be members of the Society, cannot conceal the fact that the members concerned are to be expelled against their own will and judgment, from the Vorstand and from the Society respectively.

The motions are followed by an explanatory paragraph purporting to outline the reasons for these extreme measures, and making grave and sweeping accusations against those concerned, as of deliberate untruthfulness, or of pursuing for years past, from the responsible positions they occupied in the Society, "private aims and ambitions of power by every means at their disposal." Further, a Memorandum bearing on the events of the last ten years in the Society and obtainable through the Secretariat of the Society at the Goetheanum, is announced. This Memorandum, the signatories of which are among the proposers of the motions, became available barely three weeks before the Meeting at which the decisive steps are proposed to be taken. Claiming to place before the members facts upon which a true judgment can be based, the Memorandum, which, as it says at the close, has taken months to prepare, is at the same time avowedly an ex parte statement. Incidents to which the signatories attach historic importance and of which, in many cases, they can have had no direct personal knowledge, are described by them without calling in the evidence of the immediate participants, unless the latter were of like mind with themselves.

On the strength of evidence thus compiled and presented, the members assembled in General Meeting are asked to take a decision, the immediate effect of which, if it takes effect at all, can only be to sunder the community created and confirmed by Rudolf Steiner at the Foundation of this Society. By whatever arguments these measures of expulsion

are advanced; by whatever legal formulae they seek enforcement; for the members concerned they cannot possibly have the effect of severing them from the Foundation which was laid by Rudolf Steiner in the hearts of all Anthroposophists, at Christmas, 1923. The suggestion that a comparatively small number of members are concerned, enhanced on this occasion by the way in which a few individuals are singled out for special mention and punishment, can but create a dangerous illusion in this regard.

Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain

RUDOLF STEINER HOUSE, 35 PARK RD., LONDON, N.W.1

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No fundamental change in the relation of these members to Rudolf Steiner and to Anthroposophy, only the line they have sincerely taken in the midst of differences and difficulties, the existence of which on both sides is admitted, is the real reason for the proposed expulsion. The difficulties are not solved thereby: they are only evaded. Some among those whose expulsion is proposed—notably the two Vorstand Members, Dr. Vreede and, above all, Dr. Wegman who is also the most severely attacked—stood in a very near relation to Rudolf Steiner and played no little part in the resolves and actions of the time of the Foundation. The recorded words and the remembered deeds of Rudolf Steiner on that occasion are in overwhelming contrast to the decisions we are now called upon to take, which the proposers and the authors of the Memorandum seek to justify by presenting a most derogatory picture of these Vorstand Members, not only of their actions but of their character and motives. The picture thus presented is not the Truth. It does the greatest injustice to

Rudolf Steiner himself, and it will not go down to History save to the shame of those who now put it forward.

In justification of these exclusive measures, much is made of the Declaration of Will in which we ourselves (not only Mr. Dunlop and Mr. Kaufmann) took the initiative last year in consultation with members in other countries, and which we signed⁸² as the responsible Executive of this national Society. The negative and destructive light in which Dr. Wegman, Dr. Vreede and other leading members and their activities are looked upon by some of our fellow-members at the Goetheanum, is revealed to the full extent in the articles, paragraphs, motions and memoranda now placed before us. If, in effect, these adverse judgments underlay the treatment—the cold-shouldering, the disdain and even active opposition—which our best efforts and initiatives received increasingly as the years went by, any impartial observer might understand the protest, the assertion of our will and presence which we voiced in the much maligned Declaration and by which we stand to-day. That Declaration called for recognised differentiation within the one Society. Even the union of already existing Groups in different countries, which is now made the basis of the proposed expulsions, even this free and loose association was only entered into during last summer after our request for mutual agreement and for a place within the Goetheanum had been denied.

We affirm that the measures now proposed, and above all the procedure which has been adopted, are contrary in spirit not only to the Foundation Statutes of our Society but to elementary principles of justice. We shall demonstrate our absolute rejection of this procedure by absenting ourselves from the General Meeting, so far as any official representation of this national Society is concerned. It is to be hoped that members who are still capable of looking upon recent history with some degree of detachment will realise that there must be two sides at least from which the events of the past ten years may be viewed and examined. Not a few of those members who adhere to the present leadership must to some extent be disconcerted at such ruthless methods as are now propounded.

The truth will only begin to emerge when the two sides of the story are available. Moreover, if and when there is a will to settle differences on both sides, the way can be found. Is it too late to suggest that there is a better way, leading to work carried on "in peace and without fighting" in the future? We think there is, and we are prepared to assist in finding it, if given reasonable opportunity and if we find any degree of readiness on the other side.

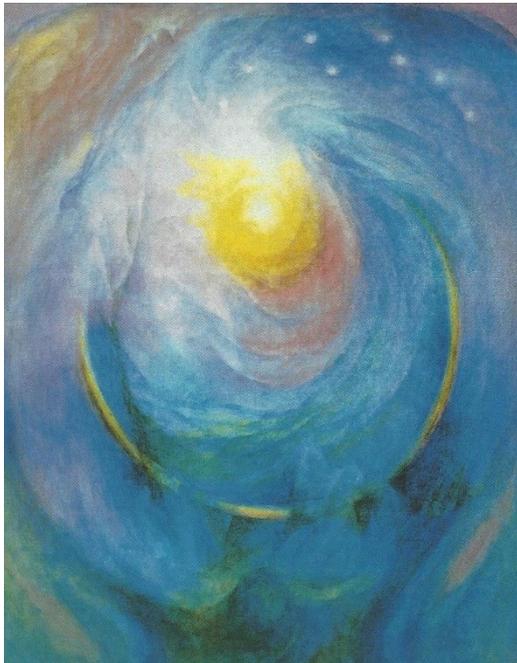
Finally, we must declare that the motions, if passed by the General Meeting, will receive no recognition from us. We shall continue with our tasks for Anthroposophy inspired by Rudolf Steiner's life-work, on the basis of the spiritual freedom embodied in the Foundation Statutes, and we shall con-

⁸² With the exception of Mr. L. F. Edmunds, who since February, 1935, has taken the place of Mr. Arthur Sheen on this Executive.

tinue to regard the Goetheanum as “there for all members.” In the absence of justice in any procedure, there can be no respect for merely legal clauses. We regard as invalid any decision which would make the Foundation Meeting ineffective.

Executive Council (Vorstand) der Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain

D.N. Dunlop, Generalsekretär, M. Wheeler, Schatzmeister, Owen Barfield, Andrew Curtis, L. F. Edmunds, E. S. Francis, G. S. Francis, A. C. Harwood, George Kaufmann, Mary Kaufmann, Michael Wilson, Theodora M. Wilson.



Winter imagination, J.D. Habegger

Please note

«Deepening Anthroposophy»

An independent newsletter for members of the Anthroposophical Society and friends of anthroposophy
Responsible: Thomas O’Keefe, Email: deepening@use.startmail.com

«Ein Nachrichtenblatt»

Newsheet for members of the Anthroposophical Society and friends of anthroposophy
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Imprint

This newsletter is an independent and private initiative on current and historical questions and affairs concerning the General Anthroposophical Society and its environment. Each author is solely responsible for his articles. Unlabelled articles originate from the publisher himself. Electronic ordering is free of charge, postal delivery only on request. The newsletter can be passed on with pleasure. As far as possible, all articles appear in German and English. Further contributions can be found on the website: www.gv-2018.com. The Internet page, especially the English part, is under construction.

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