

## Expectations

### **Note regarding the English translation**

*With this translation of contributions on certain developments concerning the General Anthroposophical Society, this non-official website also begins to report in English. Unfortunately, not all publications and foundational information which these reports refer to and which are cited as sources are available in English. Nevertheless, the reader should be able to form a realistic picture of the developments. We hope that further sources, currently only available in German, can also be translated into English in the near future.*

### **Amendment 3 July 2018**

*The following article was sent to the Goetheanum leadership on September 11, 2017 with the request for publication, but it was not published. Matthias Girke's reply to this article was the only written reaction from the leadership of the Society. However, M. Girke did not address a single point within it. Instead, he reported on his experiences in dealing with conflicts in other circumstances and asked that the Executive Council and the Goetheanum Leadership not be distracted from their important work. A detailed documentation of this and the subsequent correspondence is planned.*

### **What can members and the leadership of the General Anthroposophical Society expect from each other?**

Recently, two remarkable expectations with regard to members have been formulated by the Society's representatives, which will be considered below.

#### **I. In connection with the exhibition brochure "Images of Rudolf Steiner" ("Rudolf Steiner Bilder")**

##### **A reminder**

As part of the exhibition "Images of Rudolf Steiner", a small brochure about the documentation was published at the Goetheanum. From the introduction:

*"On Rudolf Steiner's 155th birthday, the library at the Goetheanum will show imaginative encounters [with Rudolf Steiner] in photography, painting, sculpture and writing. This booklet brings together a selection of text passages."*

In this brochure, the following quote by Helmut Zander was reproduced without any commentary as part of these "imaginative encounters":

*"Unfortunately, we know next to nothing about Steiner during his time as an esoteric student [...] critics and scholars have also wondered about Steiner's psychological disposition: whether (polemically speaking) he was 'insane' or (more seriously) suffering from 'schizophrenia.' However, more recent psycho-medical considerations are lacking. Or did he perhaps take drugs? Along with snuff (which he loved) could he have also ingested cocaine ('snow' as it is called in his letters)—perhaps consciously, perhaps without knowing it? Hallucinogenic substances—if he took them—might explain individual experiences but do not take into account his involvement with meditative techniques over the course of two and a half decades. Steiner remains largely hidden from us as an esoteric student. We know much more about Steiner as a teacher."<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by Doug and Marguerite Miller, Deepening Anthroposophy 5.2

Stephen E. Usher, a member from the USA, was of the opinion that such a quotation should not be distributed without comment by the Goetheanum and remarked on this in writing in "Deepening Anthroposophy"<sup>2</sup> and in "Ein Nachrichtenblatt"<sup>3</sup>. In connection with the dispute resulting from this, Justus Wittich wrote<sup>4</sup> the following, stating his position:

*"I believe, however, that if a member were to notice an actual or alleged error at or in the Goetheanum it would be appropriate for that member if they felt obliged first and foremost to point this out to those responsible or to talk to them directly."*

The essential aspect of this statement is that Stephen E. Usher has behaved "inappropriately" (towards those responsible). In the same article the following was alleged of Stephen E. Usher:

*"Before his departure he had two conversations with members of the Goetheanum leadership but never mentioned his indignation."*

In fact, Stephen E. Usher had written in the article to which Justus Wittich refers:

*"At the end of an enjoyable visit to the Goetheanum from 19 - 25 September 2016, I came across a small brochure entitled 'Images of Rudolf Steiner'. ..."*

If he had read it carefully, Justus Wittich might have realised that Stephen E. Usher had by no means withheld his indignation intentionally, but had only become aware of the brochure shortly before his departure, i.e. *after* the conversations. The result is the frivolous discrediting of a member, which has now been spread worldwide. Only the readers of "Ein Nachrichtenblatt" were able to form an impression of the background to the events; the readers of "Anthroposophie Worldwide," however, were unaware of it initially. Stephen E. Usher's alleged behaviour is assessed by Justus Wittich as follows:

*"In my opinion, to deliberately not do this [i.e., not to first of all address those responsible], but to denounce the Goetheanum or individual responsible persons via e-mail distribution lists and electronic media within member circles and elsewhere worldwide without first checking the context, caused considerably more damage to the Goetheanum than the actual omission described above."*

But didn't a member of the Executive Council do exactly what Stephen E. Usher was accused of? And on a much larger scale: according to the editors, the German edition of "Anthroposophie weltweit" alone has a circulation of approx. 20,000 copies! Obviously without having read the article carefully, without responding to the points of criticism mentioned, and evidently without clarifying whether his suspicions were correct, Stephen E. Usher was pilloried in front of the entire membership worldwide by Justus Wittich, member of the Executive Council. What's more, in front of a membership that was not able to judge the issue for itself, since all previous comments on it were published elsewhere. Would it not have been more correct and more appropriate if Justus Wittich had published his reaction - in line with his own demands - exactly where the discussion arose: in "Ein Nachrichtenblatt"? A conversation simply cannot make any sense if parts of it happen in different places<sup>5</sup>. Perhaps the editors of "Ein Nachrichtenblatt" would also have pointed out to him his embarrassing mistake (i.e., the

<sup>2</sup> Issue 5.2, 4 October 2016

<sup>3</sup> Issue 21/2016

<sup>4</sup> Anthroposophy Worldwide, No. 12/2016

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted here that Justus Wittich's contribution referred to "Ein Nachrichtenblatt" and reacted to an article for the first time in Anthroposophy Worldwide. Nevertheless, according to the minutes ("Anthroposophy worldwide" 5/17) of the General Assembly, Justus Wittich explains that the Executive Council at the Goetheanum does not take a position on statements in "Ein Nachrichtenblatt", which is not true insofar as this is exactly what happened in his article.

false assertion that Stephen E. Usher had deliberately held back his indignation) before publication, prompting a possible correction, which the editors of "Anthroposophie weltweit" did not do.

Stephen E. Usher justified his actions as follows<sup>6</sup>:

*"I took my concerns directly to the membership for two reasons: Firstly, because of the seriousness of what the Goetheanum is doing, and secondly because I realized that because of the culture prevailing at the Goetheanum, the leadership would do anything to prevent my concerns from being heard by a wider public."*<sup>7</sup>

In fact, Justus Wittich's behaviour confirmed Stephen E. Usher's assumptions, since he merely presented his own view to the readers of "Anthroposophy Worldwide", depriving the members of the necessary basis for judgement in the form of the preceding correspondence which had appeared in "Ein Nachrichtenblatt".

Another aspect of Justus Wittich's article:

*"A number of members adopted the views of Stephen E. Usher and took up their pens - both publicly in Roland Tüscher's paper<sup>8</sup> and in outraged letters to the Executive Council of the Goetheanum."*

Justus Wittich thus accuses the members of having "adopted" Stephen E. Usher's view instead of forming their own judgement. What gives Justus Wittich the right to make such insinuations about the members? I am grateful to have been made aware of the matter and have personally formed my own opinion on this matter. As a reader of "Ein Nachrichtenblatt", I was able to do so. Those who had only read "Anthroposophy Worldwide" could not arrive at an independent judgement due to a lack of basic facts, as has already been explained; at that point in time,<sup>9</sup> they could only have adopted the view of Justus Wittich. Should it not have been possible for members to expect one of the leaders of the Executive Council of the General Anthroposophical Society to provide comprehensive and non-selective information which would create the necessary conditions for independent judgement?

At the end of his article, Justus Wittich wrote:

*"But if this controversy conceals a lack of understanding or dissatisfaction with the current course of the Goetheanum or the leadership of the General Anthroposophical Society, we should openly engage in conversation<sup>10</sup> about it within the membership."*

An irritating question. Is it just rhetorical? It was already clear at this time that Stephen E. Usher and a number of other members obviously did not see it as the task of the Goetheanum to publish tenden-

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<sup>6</sup> „Ein Nachrichtenblatt“, No. 22/2016

<sup>7</sup> It is an open secret that the selection of member letters published in Goetheanum publications does not always take place in the sense of a balanced method of reporting which would inform members as objectively as possible. This has been common practice for decades, but has increased considerably since the discontinuation of the weekly newsletter "Was in der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft vorgeht" in 2011, which was founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1924. Naturally, such an approach is denied by the publishers and is difficult to prove. But that isn't actually necessary; there have been enough experiences similar to the one Stephen E. Usher has encountered.

<sup>8</sup> This means "Ein Nachrichtenblatt"

<sup>9</sup> A corrective reaction by Stephen E. Usher was not published until 2 months later in "Anthroposophy worldwide" 12/17.

<sup>10</sup> This conversation had already begun. It all started in "Ein Nachrichtenblatt". But Justus Wittich did not participate in it. His contribution had appeared in another "location". However, a conversation can only be truly open and fruitful if it is conducted or written in the same location.

tious citations, such as the one by Helmut Zander, without comment, especially on Rudolf Steiner's 155th birthday. There was indeed, therefore, an obvious lack of understanding or dissatisfaction in the sense formulated by Justus Wittich. What else had to happen to make him engage in the conversation that had already begun, a conversation that he himself is asking for?

Has not the unjustified and irrevocable discrediting of a member (Stephen E. Usher) by a member of the Executive Council caused at least considerable moral damage? Could a member not have expected an apology and correction from Justus Wittich?

## II "Criticism should be organic"?

In "Anthroposophy worldwide" 6/17 an article was published with the title "Criticism should be organic", which Wolfgang Held wrote as "Spokesman for the Goetheanum" by order and on behalf of the Executive Council and the Goetheanum Leadership. At the beginning it says:

*"The Goetheanum is currently being confronted with insinuations and assertions that were also made at the General Assembly. Wolfgang Held describes the circumstances and advocates a kind of criticism that promotes conversation."*

The background to these alleged "insinuations and assertions" was the decision to paint over the wall-paintings created by Andrea and Christian Hitsch based on motifs by Rudolf Steiner (they were painted in the foyer in front of the Foundation Stone Hall), as well as the situation surrounding the location of the model of the first Goetheanum. Leonhard Schuster commented on this at the 2017 Annual General Meeting in connection with the discharge of the Executive Council. Here, too, it is symptomatic that the reader of "Anthroposophy Worldwide" is deprived of the basis of knowledge and is only presented with the view of the Goetheanum spokesman.

However, the "description of the circumstances" made by Wolfgang Held does not correspond to the facts, as Leonhard Schuster states in a correction<sup>11</sup>. This has been available to the Goetheanum Leadership and the editorial staff for publication since mid-June 2017. Wolfgang Held has not yet corrected the untrue allegations.

Wolfgang Held continues:

*"Rudolf Steiner's arithmetic of insight that one step in knowledge should correspond to two in morality probably also applies to objections: A step in criticism requires two steps in solidarity and empathy. If they are missing, the criticism does not lead to conversation, but poisons the conversation - the criticism becomes an instrument, becomes an attack".*

To refer here in this way to Rudolf Steiner appears a questionable procedure, the original quotation which this "transformation" of Wolfgang Held<sup>12</sup> presumably refers to is found in "How Does One Attain Knowledge of the Higher Worlds?" (GA 10):

*"This golden rule is as follows: For every one step that you take in the pursuit of higher knowledge, take three steps in the perfection of your own character."*

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<sup>11</sup> The contents presented by Leonhard Schuster at the Annual General Meeting were published in "Ein Nachrichtenblatt" No. 9/2017. Leonhard Schuster's subsequent correction of Wolfgang Held's article, whose reprint in "Anthroposophy Worldwide" has so far been refused, can be found in "Ein Nachrichtenblatt" No. 12/2017

<sup>12</sup> On 12 June 2017, the author asked Wolfgang Held whether he referred to Rudolf Steiner's reference in GA 10. An answer is still outstanding in June 2018.

Wolfgang Held replaces "higher knowledge" with "criticism" and "the perfection of your character" with "solidarity and empathy". Is it not rather Wolfgang Held who attacks the alleged critics with this quotation, which has been changed in a very questionable way, implying that they lack empathy and solidarity?

*An interposed question seems necessary here: For whom should "critics" develop more empathy and solidarity? It seems that this can only mean the Executive Council or the Goetheanum Leadership. But where is empathy and solidarity with Andrea and Christian Hitsch, Rudolf Feuerstack and all the members who care about their work? Doesn't the expectation of empathy and solidarity towards the leadership of the Society expressed here mean that these seem to be more important than the knowledge of facts and truth?*

And isn't it this contribution that poisons the situation with untrue claims - on behalf of the Executive Council, the Goetheanum Leadership, even the entire Goetheanum? If Rudolf Steiner's so-called "cognitive arithmetic" is being referred to by Wolfgang Held, then the very first condition mentioned in "How Does One Attain Knowledge of the Higher Worlds?" would probably have been appropriate:

*Devotion to truth and knowledge.*<sup>13</sup>

The relationship any individual has to these aspects of the path of schooling should remain their personal affair. However, special care is certainly required and to be expected in the area of knowledge of the facts and the truthfulness of statements within public works in the journalistic field, especially before members are publicly criticised or pilloried.

### III. From a conversation with Justus Wittich

At a meeting with Justus Wittich on 24 April 2017, following the General Meeting, I drew his attention, both verbally and in writing, to various incorrect reports from the General Meeting in the weekly magazine, including these:

*"Benjamin Kolass of the German National Society commented with regard to the group's<sup>14</sup> publication as follows: 'it is hardly in line with anthroposophical culture to call for resignations in the Christmas edition'"*<sup>15</sup>.

The fact of the matter is: There is no Christmas issue of "Ein Nachrichtenblatt" in which "resignations" were called for! Wolfgang Held accepted this untrue assertion without checking whether it even corresponds to the facts. Journalistically this is negligent at the very least and, since it concerns the discrediting of a member initiative, also morally questionable for a spokesman of the Goetheanum.

As a member of the Society, having pointed out these errors, I would have expected Justus Wittich and Wolfgang Held to make a correction and at least include a corresponding note in the minutes of the General Meeting. Benjamin Kolass would also have been expected to correct his untrue assertion. I had written to him on 10 April 2017 and asked him to name the Christmas issue in which the demand for resignation had supposedly appeared, but there was no reply. An oversight could certainly have been cleared up quickly, but that did not happen. So this false assertion - reproduced several times - simply remains out there. And this in a Society in which one should feel particularly committed to knowledge and truth.

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<sup>13</sup> "How Does One Attain Knowledge of the Higher Worlds?", Rudolf Steiner, GA 10

<sup>14</sup> The "group" obviously refers to the applicants.

<sup>15</sup> "Das Goetheanum", No. 17 / 2017

With regard to the motion to repeal the 1935 exclusion of the Council members, Wolfgang Held summarized Peter Selg's contribution in "Das Goetheanum" No. 17 of 21 April 2017:

*"This [the rehabilitation of Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede] had long since happened."*

Concerning this completely distorted representation, I provided Justus Wittich on 24 April 2017 with a written account of what Peter Selg had actually said:

*Peter Selg did not say this; rather, he made it clear that there can be no question of rehabilitation with regard to the Society and he asked or rather expressed his hope that a clear step could be taken at the General Assembly in the direction of what the motion called for. In addition, he pointed to incorrect or incomplete representations in the research by Uwe Werner and in the 'Amendment' by Gerald Häfner.*

More precisely: On the contrary, Peter Selg said, according to his own statements:

*"It might seem that Ita Wegman's 'rehabilitation' has long since taken place as a result of the facts or the life she has lived - so through the work of the medical section at the Goetheanum. And one could also suggest - and one often says this - that the former members of the Executive Council have long been positively connected with each other in the spiritual world. However, rehabilitation on earth is something completely different - and of essential importance. Rudolf Steiner had repeatedly pointed out how important earthly consciousness is - for the spiritual world too. And one must also bear in mind that no victim of National Socialism has been "rehabilitated" by the fact that the hierarchies in the spiritual world have taken care of him. Rather, much has been done in recent decades to come to terms with the 'blatant' misery inflicted on these victims on earth and to give them back their name, their meaning and thus their dignity. This is also urgently needed in the Anthroposophical Society - indeed absolutely crucial".*

*"... It cannot be said that the annulment of the decisions of 1935 [in 1949] was only omitted out of 'respect for the deceased'<sup>16</sup>. Instead, the verdict against Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede in their activities as Council members persisted - and the "Memorandum" was withdrawn for current socio-political reasons. Also, the removal of such an indictment from circulation is something completely different than the denial or factual refutation of its content".*

Would it not have been appropriate, especially in accordance with the claims that we formulated ourselves, for a correction to have been made? The minutes of the General Assembly also gave a completely distorted account of Peter Selg's speech. It was only through Peter Selg's personal intervention that "Anthroposophy Worldwide" 6/17 replaced the text of the minutes with, as Paul Mackay, Justus Wittich and Oliver Conradt call it there, "a more precise summary of his speech". Peter Selg himself wrote in "Das Goetheanum" No. 22 (bold print by Th. Heck):

*"Based on several letters to the editor I would like to point out: The description of Wolfgang Held in his short summary of the AGM debate on Motion 6 (Wegman/Vreede), according to which I had described Ita Wegman's rehabilitation as "long since done", **does not correspond to what I said** - nor does the short protocol in "Anthroposophy worldwide" No. 5/2017. My actual words have been published in "Anthroposophy worldwide" No. 6."*

The appendix contains a comparison of the two, so that the reader can form his own opinion of what is understood here as a "**more precise summary**".

**The fact that attention was drawn to these misrepresentations by a "simple member" had no effect; it required Peter Selg's direct intervention. In this sense, Stephen E. Usher's justification for addressing the public immediately is quite understandable and obviously appropriate.**

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<sup>16</sup> See also the request to Motion 6 by Gerald Häfner, "Anthroposophy Worldwide" 5/17.

Both Justus Wittich and Wolfgang Held claim in their contributions that there is a willingness to have conversation. I ask you to understand this present contribution in that spirit. The space for discussion is "Anthroposophy worldwide". If the offer of a discussion is meant seriously, nothing should stand in the way of an unabridged publication of this article there, including the appendix, so that members are in a position to form their own opinions and thus to participate in the discussion in a meaningful way.

*Thomas Heck, 11 September 2017, rev. 3 July 2018*

## Appendix

Comparison of the protocol reproduction from AWW 5/17 with what Peter Selg actually said, published in AWW 6/17 and referred to there as the "more precise" version. The paragraphing was added later for better comparability, as were the highlights.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Minutes</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Anthroposophie Worldwide“ 5/17</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Correction by Peter Selg</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Anthroposophie Worldwide“ 6/17</p>
<p>The consultation on Motion 6 continues with a contribution by Peter Selg (Arlesheim/ch). He first thanks Justus Wittich for asking him to contribute to this debate.</p>	<p>The consultation on Motion 6 continues with a contribution by Peter Selg (Arlesheim/ch). He first thanks Justus Wittich for asking him to contribute to the debate.</p>
<p>The rehabilitation of Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede has long since taken place in the spiritual world. On earth also much has happened in the direction of rehabilitation because of the reality of the medical movement.</p>	<p>One could be of the opinion that the rehabilitation of Ita Wegman has long since taken place (among other things through the positive work that is being done by the Medical Section) and that Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede have long been reunited with their former colleagues in the spiritual world. But their rehabilitation on earth – which would include the clarification and exposure of the injustice done to the two women – is a different matter altogether and needs to happen. Rudolf Steiner always emphasized the importance of earthly thinking processes and actions.</p>
<p>He is nevertheless grateful for the discussion that was initiated by the motion.</p>	<p>Peter Selg is therefore grateful for the impulse arising from the motion.</p>
<p>Do we really agree on the impulses given by Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede? Peter Selg assumes that, in 1949, an initiative to include the two women again in the Executive Council would have had no chance. Neither would he set too much store in Poppelbaum’s conciliatory gesture.</p>	<p>The interpretations of the events at the 1949 General Meeting quoted by Uwe Werner were, in this form, not historically correct – the withdrawal of the Memorandum from the bookshops at the time had to do with day-to-day politics and definitely did not constitute a “peace offering”. A</p>

	<p>motion to withdraw the decisions of 1935 would have had no chance at the time and was not only held back "out of respect for the dead". The judgement passed on Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede in 1935 continued to be accepted in 1949 – neither Albert Steffen nor Guenther Wachsmuth were of the opinion that they had made a mistake in 1935.</p>
<p>Peter Selg proposes that the General Meeting today make a decision along the lines of Gerald Häfner's alternative proposal so that justice can be done to the impulses of Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede now and in the future.</p>	<p>Peter Selg welcomes the motion, but also the concern put forward by Gerald Häfner, and he proposes to connect both initiatives. The motion has expressed a will impulse on the basis of which one can now work towards a rehabilitation in the way suggested by the concern. The Anthroposophical Society needs the support of the important individualities of Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede, in particular in the changing times today, so that the Society can find the way forward into the future.</p>