

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

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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. Editor: Thomas Heck. Impressum at the end of this issue.

A vision for the General Anthroposophical Society?

"The General Anthroposophical Society does not need less, but more codetermination by its members right now. This is the only way the Society can succeed in the long term. That is why - after many breathless rescue measures - the issue of codetermination will be the focus of discussion in the coming years.

*In doing so, technocratic absolutism from above must be opposed from below by the model of a codetermination-oriented General Anthroposophical Society. We need a Society in which **the fundamental elements of the threefold social order are taken into account** and in which also all essential impulses really come from the members and the executive bodies elected by them. Only in this way can the General Anthroposophical Society regain the trust lost through bureaucratization and incorrect crisis management.*

Members must be able to have their say when it comes to major decisions on their future. This is what we should be working for - be it in Dornach, Europe or in the world.

The challenges facing the General Anthroposophical Society are constantly increasing: overcoming the financial crisis, realizing the anthroposophical artistic impulse to preserve the Goetheanum as a Mystery center, realizing a contemporary and liberal form of the School of Spiritual Science organization, asserting the scientific nature of anthroposophy as an impulse for contemporary academia, setting an example for a true and fact-oriented media landscape ... - and much more. In order to be able to make decisions in all these areas on behalf of all members, the Society needs a much stronger legitimacy than today.

An effective and strong Society can only succeed in the long term as a Society of members. Only through broad internal social debates, through effective democratic control of the decisions by officials and through the prevention of influence by financially powerful institutions does the Society have a chance of overcoming the crisis in the long term.

We therefore need ways in which the ideas, wishes and concerns of the members can get through to Dornach in as unfiltered a way as possible and influence decisions in the Society. To this end, we must strengthen existing and proven instruments such as the right to motions or the publication mediums of the Society - as well as implement new ones, such as regional member conferences, in the interests of the broadest possible participation. In addition, we must not stop demanding further rights of participation for members - such as the appropriate time-allowance during general meetings and the introduction of a lower quota for the convening of extraordinary general meetings."

This "Vision for a General Anthroposophical Society" is intended as a stimulus for thought. The creation was inspired by a text from Gerald Häfner: "For a Europe of citizens". Link: <http://www.geraldhaefner.de/2013/01/fuer-ein-europa-der-buergerinnen-und-buerger/> (German only)

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Notes and background to current events at the General Anthroposophical Society

It is part of the self-conception of the leadership of the General Anthroposophical Society, the Goetheanum, and the School of Spiritual Science that all decisions are made autonomously and independently. As far as day-to-day operations are concerned, this is certainly to be regarded as a matter of course. However, in our Society this also applies to "major" decisions that concern the tasks and goals of the Society, decisions about direction and future development of the Society. The "Goetheanum in Development" project currently being pursued was developed and decided on exclusively by the governing bodies and to this day the membership has not been fully informed about it. Another recent example refers to the so-called "caesura", the reaffirmation of Paul Mackay and Bodo von Plato as members of the Executive Council. In this context it was only reported that intensive discussions were being conducted by the leadership, including a review of the past as well as an outlook into the future; the membership, however, was not informed about the content of these discussions and no reports were issued either. The Executive Council merely expressed the repeated and urgent wish that the members should confirm this extension of the term of office. Further examples were the motions no. 5-12 of the 2018 General Meeting,

which were regarded by the Society's Executive Council merely as "requests and wishes for the attention of the Executive Council in the form of motions on which the General Meeting can vote" and the results of such a vote were regarded as non-binding. Even decisions taken after the General Meeting due to non-confirmation were announced only as a result.

Whether this approach or behaviour of the leadership of the Society is modern, in accordance with the nature of an Anthroposophical Society, and is so desired by most members, should not be discussed here right now. Some may complain about the current situation, but the fact is that the Society's Executive Council is quite within their rights to act in this way. This is because the procedure corresponds to the statutory regulations of the General Anthroposophical Society, which were agreed upon by the membership in earlier years.

However, since most of the members are not interested in the statutes and the Goetheanum Leadership does not communicate these facts openly and clearly, they are largely unknown. The following is a compilation of the corresponding statutory regulations and their origins. The latter is particularly interesting and important, as it becomes clear that these are by no means regulations which can be traced back to Rudolf Steiner.

1. The principle of co-optation in particular does not go back to Rudolf Steiner. On the contrary, in connection with the so-called "Stuttgarter System" he described a similar procedure as "inbreeding" (GA 259, 1991, page 226, German). The statutes of the General Anthroposophical Society did not incorporate this principle of co-optation until 1935¹. There

¹ At this General Assembly, Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede were expelled from the Executive Council and other prominent members as well as the Dutch and English National Societies were expelled from the General Anthroposophical Society. The fact that the principle of co-optation was enshrined in the statutes in this as well as the temporal context of the events in Germany should

was no discussion about it at the time. Due to the other events during that time, the members will not have recognized the significance of this amendment to the statutes of the Society.

2. The founding of the Anthroposophical Society at the Christmas Conference in 1923 was an initiative of Rudolf Steiner. He described the Council of Directors he formed at the time as an "initiative Council". And he went on to say: *"... I was able to decide myself to take the chair and ask this Society at the Dornach Christmas meeting to support me with a Council with which I can believe I can carry out my intentions."* Clearly: it was about **his** intentions, not those of his fellow Council members. And this should also make clear that he saw himself above all as a Council member of his own initiative. If the Council today describes and identifies itself as an *"initiative Council"* in the sense of the Christmas Conference Society, this is probably not only inappropriate, but also presumptuous. In 1964 the following sentence was included in the statutes: *"The Society is led by an initiative Council ..."* This amendment to the statutes was also made without further discussion.

The changes resulting from the resolutions of 12 June 2018 will be discussed below.

3. In 1975 it was then laid out in the statutes that the members had no say in the tasks and objectives of the Society and that this was the sole responsibility of the Executive Council. The wording of §8, in which this is laid out, is relatively unusual but nevertheless clear. The distinction between motions and concerns has its roots here. From this it can be explained why the motions 5-12 for the General Assembly 2018 were termed "wishes" by the Council and the voting results were regarded as optional and therefore not binding.
4. For the sake of completeness, it should also be pointed out that the remainder of the rights to

not be underestimated, but cannot be discussed further at this point.

submit motions were also to be eliminated. However, the corresponding attempts during 1999-2002 failed. These events have already been documented (currently in German only: *Ein Nachrichtenblatt* No. 4, 2017, "Zur Entwicklung des Antragswesens in der Allgemeinen Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft" and <http://gv-2018.com/motion-procedure/>).

5. In the years 2012 - 2014, a new Societal body was created with the "Goetheanum Leadership", which is mentioned in the statutes but not anchored there and thus completely outside the control of the membership. There is no accountability either. According to *Anthroposophy Worldwide* 1-2/13, only administrative tasks were delegated by the Council: "In the course of this process [of forming the Goetheanum Leadership], the Executive Council has delegated the administration at the Goetheanum to the Goetheanum Leadership. In fact, even then the scope of delegation went far beyond administrative tasks, as is clearly shown in the third letter to the members (in June 2018): *"The common intention formulated here [in the preamble of 2012] is still the core focus of our co-operation. The Executive Council still has a specific task and is ultimately responsible for the legal connection to the outside world. Internally, however, it has become integrated within the overall responsibilities of the Goetheanum Leadership since 2012. As a leadership organ, it no longer makes overall decisions but delegates the specific areas of responsibility to individual people for a period of three years. It may also withdraw or modify them. In this sense, all mandates will be newly confirmed or re-divided by the Goetheanum Leadership in June. Thus, the questions of subject knowledge from the fields of life, the research and the coordination tasks of the eleven sections, as well as the management of the house, are gradually converging into a common awareness of the Anthroposophical Society at large."*²

These statements require further investigation. However, it is already clear that the Executive

² Anthroposophy Worldwide 6/18

Council ultimately only has an external responsibility (whatever this may mean). An internal responsibility, and above all the specific anthroposophical tasks and the orientation of the Society, can no longer be assigned. Notable, although consistent with the above, is the fact that members are not mentioned at all and therefore do not play a role in these matters (interestingly, in the internal working paper "Goetheanum in Development", the members are referred to as "outside" at one point; the relationship with them should be analysed and optimised with the help of external consultants!³) All in all, this results in a situation where the General Anthroposophical Society doesn't actually have any organ which bears overall responsibility and can be held accountable, as already mentioned above. The members of the Goetheanum Leadership as "decision-makers of policy issues" are not accountable to the Society or membership, since this body is merely mentioned but not really enshrined in the statutes.

With the resolutions of 12 June 2018⁴, a further step seems to have been taken to establish the Society as a "society of officials". The following situation has now arisen:

1. Bodo von Plato and Paul Mackay are no longer in office. Bodo von Plato, however, will continue to play an important role in the "studies" at the Goetheanum and thus people, especially young people who are looking for anthroposophy, will also or especially come into contact with Bodo von Plato's understanding of anthroposophy and his views. Paul Mackay is put in the position of an "emeritus

director", which raises questions in several respects when one assumes that this choice of words may have been chosen subconsciously but not accidentally. The term "emeritus" originally comes from the ecclesiastical sphere, for example an emeritus bishop was merely freed from his everyday duties, but his authority as bishop with all rights and also all influences was preserved. Ultimately, the use of this term in the university sector also has this ecclesiastical origin and similar properties: the university lecturer is also freed from his everyday duties, he no longer has to teach, but can do so, remains in office otherwise, and continues to represent the university or the faculty. The analogy to Paul Mackay's "retirement" fits with the fact that he is available as a consultant and for special tasks. He also represents the General Anthroposophical Society on the Board of Directors of Weleda. It can be assumed that Paul Mackay can and will continue to have significant influence on developments in the Society even without an official post, but now completely in the background and without any accountability to the membership. It is also questionable whether it is appropriate and factually correct for a Council member whose term of office has expired and whose extension has been rejected by the membership to be promoted to the status of emeritus Council member. Could this have been the intention of the General Assembly?

2. The Council has now "delegated" its statutory-defined "Initiative" (§ 12 "The Society is headed by an Initiative Council "). In the Goetheanum Leadership, however, no "policy decisions" are made, but are also delegated. This results in the following formal-legal situation:

- a. the members have relinquished the decision-making authority over the tasks and objectives of the Society to the Executive Council (§8 of the Statutes since 1975),
- b. the Council has now delegated these tasks to the Goetheanum Leadership and

³ The complete, internal version of the working paper "Goetheanum in development" can only be viewed password-protected via this link: <http://gv-2018.com/goetheanum-in-entwicklung-2/> Password: gid2017

⁴ This letter will probably be published in "Anthroposophy worldwide" 7-8/2018 and is already published on the Internet: <https://www.goetheanum.org/en/aag/annual-general-meeting-2018/fourth-letter-to-the-members-mid-june-2018/>

- c. the Goetheanum Leadership in turn delegates any individual decisions (probably predominantly to one or more members of the Goetheanum Leadership).

Originally, as already mentioned, only administrative tasks were delegated to the Goetheanum Leadership (see above). In the meantime however, the Goetheanum leadership has become "the" central governing body of the Society, where all essential decisions (albeit delegated further) concerning the Society, the Goetheanum and the School of Spiritual Science are taken in complete autonomy. Since it is a body which is not enshrined in the statutes, basically a non-legal body of the Society, the membership has no influence over it and there is no accountability to the membership, as has already been explained. An increase in competencies is hardly possible any more. Whether such a concentration of competence without accountability is in line with a modern social structure and how this structure can be harmonized with Rudolf Steiner's ideas and approaches for a prosperous coexistence of people and humanity, or even serve as a model example, must remain a matter for a separate investigation. In principle, such concentrations of power are more likely to be found in totalitarian systems. The difference is however that the membership of the General Anthroposophical Society has the opportunity to change this system by means of motions at a General Assembly, provided a majority in favour can be found.

There are different signals from the Society's Executive Council regarding the inclusion of the membership. In 2011, for example, the Executive Council submitted a proposal to introduce a break ("caesura"), stating, among other things: "... we believe it is necessary that not only the governing bodies of the Society and the School of Spiritual Science, but also the members are increasingly involved in the responsibilities" (AWW 3/11). And also excerpts from an interview after the Annual General Meeting 2011:

Question: Another motive was that the Council wanted to get involved "more and more" with the members. Hasn't that been the case so far?

Paul Mackay: It's about developing a new social field. This means that the members have more involvement. This means that it is not only about an initiative Council, but also about an initiative Society. Developing a culture of initiative is an important task for the Society. Bodo von Plato: This is to be understood in the context of a developmental direction: We have already introduced a break in the Executive Council. We would like to strengthen the cooperation of the members with the officials in charge, so that the Society becomes a partner of the Council and does not see itself as a counterpart.

Responsibility can only be assumed if one is appropriately informed. At the caesura 2018, the members were dependent on obtaining the necessary bases of judgement for themselves; there was no official information on the content, as was already reported in the last newsletter: "Here, too, there are only hints that are perhaps directed at the membership? An insinuation regarding that part of the membership which was of the opinion that a further period of activity on the Executive Council for Paul Mackay and Bodo von Plato would not make sense? It may be possible to describe in more detail at a later time how the members, in recent months, had been given no basis for judgment whatsoever, upon which to arrive at a responsible decision on this question. It is evident that it was merely reported that intensive deliberations on the caesura had taken place. Nothing was reported about the content of these deliberations. Even the interview in the weekly magazine *Das Goetheanum* (March 10, 2018) was more like a conventional election advertising and was free of content, just as were the written contributions [by the Council Members up for reaffirmation] to the General Assembly in *Anthroposophy Worldwide* (No. 1-2/2018)."

From the 2nd letter to the members of 14 May 2018:

"At present we are receiving many urgent messages regarding the possibility of how, in the future, members of our Society distributed around the world can be appropriately involved in decisions of the General Assembly, e.g. in the reaffirming of Council members,

amendments to the statutes or the membership subscriptions. The Goetheanum Leadership has now mandated Gerald Häfner (Head of Social Sciences Section) and Justus Wittich (Member of the Executive Council) to launch a process by the end of June that will lead to proposals for new forms of participation. These can then be discussed in 2019 at the General Assembly and possibly decided upon. The General Anthroposophical Society, as it exists today and has developed on a worldwide scale, should be visible and reflected right down to the statutes. Involved in this from the outset are the 19 General Secretaries, representing 18 Country Societies on five continents. At the same time, the interaction with the other 14 Country Societies (with less than 500 members) is being intensified this year."

It should be about an appropriate participation of the members in important decisions; but, again, the members are not included in the policy-making process. It may be of particular interest that now, in addition to Justus Wittich, Gerald Häfner is also significantly involved in the process. In his political career⁵, he has repeatedly and clearly committed himself to the implementation of direct democratic procedures and has also repeatedly pointed out that meaningful and sustainable social structures can only emerge from civil society. He is now in a key position in the Society and could have a significant influence on the upcoming changes in policy. Shouldn't we expect him to be committed in our Society as well, so that a future sustainable structure can also emerge with the inclusion of membership? His views on civil society should also apply to an Anthroposophical Society. To illustrate his views, a text by him from an interview is reproduced here, in which only individual words were exchanged in order to adapt them to the conditions of our Socie-

⁵ Gerald Häfner was a German politician (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen). He was a member of the German Bundestag three times between 1987 and 2002 and was a member of the European Parliament from the 2009 European elections until 2014. Häfner is a publicist, Waldorf teacher and (co-)founder of numerous initiatives and foundations such as Mehr Demokratie und Democracy International e.V. Since October 2015 he has been head of the Section for Social Sciences at the Goetheanum.

ty: "Every member can become the beginning, the starting point of a change for the whole of the Society. And if this power were taken seriously and experienced by every member, not only criticism and regret, but also the power: Yes, I can make a difference. And if I get started and my idea is not completely wrong, then others will immediately find themselves saying: can I join in? It is this power that changes the Society, indeed the world, and I would like to strengthen that. Because the worst thing for members is: There's nothing I can do. And this is growing dramatically in our society."

More and more members have the impression that the big decisions are made behind closed doors without them. That has to change and I am convinced that we can do it, because the road has only just begun and it is moving step by step and it will not stop where we are now. We'll move on."

However, it will depend very much on whether enough members take the initiative and demand active participation. Based on past experience in the history of the Society, but also based on experience in questions of political and other matters of co-determination, it cannot be expected that activities in this direction will be initiated by the Executive Council or the officials, if there isn't a sufficient number of members who will work together actively towards appropriate change.

Goethe's Faust production finally finished

Contrary to the announcements of 3.11.2017 on the occasion of the accountability report of the Council on the staging of Faust as well as at the General Assembly 2018, the current staging will not be further developed after all. Originally, this further developed version was to be re-released in 2020. This is the final conclusion of this Faust project and confirms the assessment made at the General Assembly in 2017: It was the "shortest" Faust production, the "worst" ("The production is spiritually not penetrated sufficiently", Bodo von Plato, 3.11.2017) and also the "most expensive". All previous productions have not only recouped the costs of their creation, but have also contributed to the financing of

the Goetheanum with the surplus generated. By contrast, the staging, which has now been completed, resulted in a deficit of several million Swiss Francs (the total deficit has not yet been announced by the Executive Council).

Instead of further development, individual scenes are now to be developed for a new production, rehearsed and performed "for example in a workshop form with concisely elaborated accents". This procedure essentially corresponds to the requirements of the membership motion submitted at the 2018 General Meeting. The decision now made is understandable and above all to be welcomed, for it was hard to imagine how the "insufficient spiritual penetration", which concerned the intention and style of the entire production, might have been remedied by individual changes and measures.

The reason given for the decision was that people had come to the conclusion that "it is not productive to be in the past and at the same time want something new."

A typically cryptic formulation: One cannot stand in what has been, for it has been; in order to be able to stand in it, it would still have to be, it would therefore be what it has become! But you're always in it whether you want to or not. Actually, it should be said that what has been is unsuitable for further development. One avoids expressing that the production *that has been* is unsuitable. Fog, fog and fog again.

Source: *Das Goetheanum*, No. 18 and *Anthroposophy Worldwide* 6/18

"The Goetheanum has become poor"

This heading was above the following short note by Andreas Heertsch appeared in "Ein Nachrichtenblatt" No. 12/2018 and in "Das Goetheanum".

"It no longer shines" appears the current situation of an old eurythmist who took part in a conversation between the branch members near the Goetheanum and members

of the Executive Council of the GAS. Both sides issued an invitation with the request: "After the General Assembly: let's talk to each other!" And we did talk to each other! That sounds obvious. Unfortunately, this has not been a matter of course in the past, because the diversity of the different views was often perceived as annoying in former times. To cultivate it as a value requires the willingness to make room for the other in one's own heart. A truism that quickly falls apart when I dislike the other person's view. In any case, the evening was encouraging in terms of a new, relaxed style in dealing with each other. The discussions will continue and will probably find their touchstone when it comes to making decisions.

A supplement to this:

If one understands a conversation as a social process in which further contributions follow on from the previous ones, then one must probably rather speak of a "mutual hearing", as has already been taking place since 2012 in the form of "Tuesday discussions" with the members of the Executive Council. At best, a "statement" on one topic was followed by another, but soon a new topic was introduced.

Whether "diversity of views" is a value in itself - or even "our capital", as one participant put it, is a moot point. It goes without saying that there are and must be differences in what people want. However, in questions of knowledge it should certainly be a goal to overcome "divergences". Of course there are different views on facts or social events. This gives rise to the question: Can "realities" also be divergent? According to the "Theory of Relativity" in relation to the truth by Andreas Heertsch (*Ein Nachrichtenblatt* No. 12/2018 and *Das Goetheanum* No. 24/2018) this should theoretically be possible. But in reality?

The description by an elder eurythmist who spoke of the Goetheanum having "become poor" and "no longer shining" was impressive. She listed the following reasons for her assessment: For the first time there wasn't a permanent eurythmy ensemble at the Goetheanum anymore. She reminded us of the once rich program of events and of how poor it had become in

the recent past. She also mentioned the few artistic redesigns and alterations; the situation of art at the Goetheanum had become very difficult in general. She would now prefer to hide the weekly magazine *Das Goetheanum*, which she used to like to have on the table, under other magazines. She repeatedly said, "The Goetheanum has become poor. Eurythmy used to be performed daily throughout the Goetheanum (not only by the ensemble!) and this substance-forming aether-stream fed the work throughout the house. Justus Wittich reacted to this and said that he could see it that way as well. But we would also have to bear in mind that the world has become richer. ... Anthroposophy has arrived in the world.....

It remained there, nobody responded to it, it was also not easily understandable what had been meant by it. In this context, Justus Wittich must have meant that the world had become richer in anthroposophy? Can this be a plausible explanation for the fact that the Goetheanum has become poorer? After all, the Goetheanum is also in the world so shouldn't it therefore have become richer too? Or was it meant to say that anthroposophy is now in the world but no longer at the Goetheanum?

Justus Wittich also formulated the question of how the Society could develop from a knowledge society to a will society. "We have now been a knowledge society long enough and it is now important to work together with the will in the world," said Justus Wittich. Unfortunately, one had to come to the conclusion that the "person acting out of knowledge" no longer appears. I

The "conversation" shall be continued. However, it can be expected that, as in the past, other topics will be chosen and thus the content will not be connected to the previous discussion - and thus the divergences will remain!

Anthroposophical Criticism

Those who criticize quite openly
will in turn find themselves criticized quite brazenly.

The focus of that criticism will be the "That..."
rather than the "What" or whether it is justified.

The issues thus brought to critical attention
are quickly brushed under the carpet.

After all, it would not do
to allow those matters, those criticised issues,
to manoeuvre their way to centre stage!

The thing one tends to overlook however,
is that all one is really doing is – criticizing!

Rudolf Steiner on Criticism

"Something that is very harmful to esoteric development is above all the unchecked, superficial and therefore objectively incorrect criticism that we often practice among ourselves or on our fellow human beings. I'm not saying that criticism is wrong; but it should always refer to a specific matter, rather than to persons simply because we do not like their nature."

GA 266b, Munich, 26 February 1912.

Impressum

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