
What *else* ist happening at the Goetheanum!

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Impulses for the Christmas Conference

«The esoteric continuation of this unique stream of spirituality could not be taken over by anyone from the board that he had placed at his side; it was, after all, a unique world impact. Nevertheless, this claim was made, fuelled by self-delusion and nurtured and propagandistically exploited by overzealous followers.» (Marie Steiner)

Preliminary remark

100 years ago, the Anthroposophical Society (AS) was facing significant changes and so we are also in the process of change today - albeit in a completely different way. Back then, it was the Christmas Conference with the re-founding of the Society - with Rudolf Steiner as its leader. Today we can speak of two different development processes that took shape at the last Annual General Meeting (AGM):

- The conference series of the Social Sciences Section on the Constitution, which has its origins in the re-appraisal of the history of the AS. The aim is to form a convention after the next conference (“What could become”, 23 - 25 Feb. 2024) in order to develop proposals for a renewal of the Society’s constitution. This approach is oriented towards the medium to long term.
- The member forums, the topics of which originate mainly from member initiatives. The most important of these topics, which are oriented towards short-term implementation, are
 - Inclusion of the global membership of the Anthroposophical Society in the voting process and changes to the members’ submissions system.
 - [Tasks and objectives of our Society](#).¹
 - Transparent communication.
 - Revitalisation of the speech impulse.
 - Goals, tasks and contemporary social structures of an anthroposophical society - specifically: [formation of a member-responsibility body](#).²
 - Questions on independent spiritual research.
 - Cooperation with international organisations such as the WHO (“benchmarks”), “One Health”, etc.
 - The General Anthroposophical Society’s responsibility for the direction and development of Weleda AG and the preservation of anthroposophic remedies.
 - Threefolding as a design element in our Society.

¹ www.wtg-99.com/mf-12

² www.wtg-99.com/mitglieder-organ/

The next few months will show how these impulses for renewal can be realised, now 100 years after the Christmas Conference and 99 years after 8 February 1925, when the unified constitution of the threefold organism envisaged by Rudolf Steiner (consisting of the School of Spiritual Science, the Society and the renamed building society (Bauverein)) was realised. It will also become apparent; to what extent the two current streams of development can be combined. This depends above all on whether the membership continues to actively participate in the processes to a sufficient extent.

The actual impulses for the Christmas conference

One may ask why it is so difficult to clarify the constitution process and why even today, after 100 years, there is still no complete clarity about this topic. One reason for this may lie in the different assumptions and ideas as to *why* Rudolf Steiner undertook the re-founding at the Christmas Conference and to what extent this reorganisation was related to the situation of the Society and political conditions of the time. The different views can be characterised in the following questions:

- Did Rudolf Steiner, in the sense of a progressive social development, create a social form as a work of art with the Christmas Conference Society, which - independent of the respective membership - should have existed even without him, quasi as the archetype of an anthroposophical society for the future - thus also as an archetype and guideline for us today?
- Alternatively, did he create a form that would enable him to continue working within the framework of the Society in the first place? The Society was in a disastrous state and had become an obstacle for him. “*It is ahrimanically permeated*”, he said and

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Content

Impulses for the Christmas Conference	S. 1
Results from the Survey	S. 4
Imprint	S. 6

continued: “the members are asleep; they cannot be brought to awaken”. Rudolf Steiner seriously considered withdrawing from the Society and continuing to lead the anthroposophical movement outside the Anthroposophical Society. He was still talking about this on 17 November 1923 - even immediately before the Christmas Conference on 23 Dec. 1923 ([for more details see Newsletter 4](#))³.

In order to be able to fulfil his mission, a social context was necessary, because “the whole of what is now associated with Anthroposophy cannot exist without the Anthroposophical Society and needs the Anthroposophical Society as its vessel.”⁴

Voices of the original board members⁵

“Unthinkable” (Albert Steffen)

For Albert Steffen it was quite clear: “*The Anthroposophical Society, I have said, is a work of Rudolf Steiner like other works, like Anthroposophy, like the Goetheanum ...*”

For him, it was “*quite unthinkable that the Anthroposophical Society should be thought of as abandoning this goal, this synthesis of movement and Society, after the death of Rudolf Steiner, or that it should have abandoned it after 21 years. I think that is a completely absurd thought.*” (In more detail in [Newsletter 16](#))

“Years of fulfilment?” (Guenther Wachsmuth)

Guenther Wachsmuth goes a significant step further: “*In 1924, Rudolf Steiner’s course of life reached its peak and goal in this earthly life. The birth of spiritual science was complete.*” ... “*These last years of his life, which saw the laying of the Foundation Stone for the General Anthroposophical Society, with which he united his entire being, work and destiny, were years of fulfilment in which he was able, in the circle of his co-workers, to give, organise, establish and give direction to what was necessary for the future. In this way, he created the spiritual organism of the Society and its heart organ, the School of Spiritual Science in the spirit of Michael at the Goetheanum. ... And anyone who does not recognise that this work is equally and inseparably connected with his other works, his books and writings, his deeds in knowledge, art and religious life, his gifts and sacrifices, has not understood the totality, the unity, the consistent realisation of the archetype of his creation.*”

“The Society is no longer necessary” (Ita Wegman)

From a letter to Maria Röschl: “*What Rudolf Steiner wanted with the Christmas Conference could not be rea-*

³ www.wtg-99.com/Rundbrief_4, “An aphoristic fragment on the history of the Anthroposophical Society”.

⁴ GA 257, P. 22.

⁵ More detailed reproduction of the statements of the original directors and the corresponding evidence in www.wtg-99.com/Rundbrief_16

lised, as you well know. From the very beginning, there was great resistance, and he knew this immediately after the Christmas Conference. ... All the old forms, including the very last form for anthroposophy, have been thoroughly destroyed, and it now seems to me that we no longer have to look for a form for the life of anthroposophy, but that each person himself is the form with which anthroposophy wants to unite. Where this has happened, people will find each other and unite in order to become a member of the true association of spirits. The Society is no longer necessary, because anthroposophy is already on earth. What matters now is the individual and they must then together form a higher association out of their development, which has its roots in the spiritual world.”

“An act of sacrifice” (Marie Steiner)

Marie Steiner, who had been familiar with the development of society since 1902 and had played a key role in shaping it, was perhaps the person who best grasped the situation. Rudolf Steiner valued her judgement in these matters, which he expressed in a letter dated 27 February 1925: “*I can only feel and think together in judgement with you.*”⁶

From a letter to Richard Dürich: “*Dr Guenther Wachsmuth manages to attribute it to the maturity of the Society, which has now come of age, that Dr Steiner would have found the opportunity to connect with it personally in a karmic way. However, it was not the maturity of the Society that made this possible, but a sacrificial act by Rudolf Steiner, through which he wanted to save the movement by taking the karma of the Society upon himself. Through this sacrifice, he was able to bring down the highest spiritual revelations, but he had to pay for this with his life. From 1922 onwards, he had to ask himself whether it would still be possible for him to continue working with the Society, which had left the fertile soil of anthroposophy and had fragmented into the most diverse groups, some of which stood isolated or fought each other, or to create another instrument for the movement? ...*

Instead of creating a new tool for his spiritual work, as he had previously considered, he decided to make the sacrifice of his person. He decided to combine his karma with that of the Society, whereas previously he had tried to place them on their own, as it were, and to educate them towards independence with himself as a spiritual leader who would advise them. Now he saw that the Society had not yet reached this level of maturity and took over the chair himself. We have experienced what this sacrifice meant: he brought down an almost incalculable wealth of spiritual revelations, which he paid for with his physical death. The esoteric continuation of this unique spiritual influx could not be taken over by anyone from the board of directors that he had placed at his side; after all, it was a unique world impact. Nevertheless, this claim was made, fuelled by self-delusion,

⁶ GA 262, P. 450.

*nurtured, and propagandistically exploited by overzealous followers. ...*¹

It is remarkable that Marie Steiner and Ita Wegman in particular could have agreed in their assessment of conditions within the Society.

“Anthroposophy would have come”

It is only possible here to give a very brief outline of the - basically undeveloped - preconditions for Rudolf Steiner's work. With the fifth post-Atlantean cultural epoch, a completely new situation had arisen for human development. In the course of individualisation, the human being has to focus on himself and increasingly take responsibility for his own further development. This also entails, for example, the need to find new social forms of coexistence. A spiritual battle has broken out, because there are “world powers” that want to preserve the old forms and keep humankind in a state of dependency. However, the end of the Kali Yuga was a fact, as was the beginning of the Michael period and Rudolf Steiner's work. However, many spiritual development impulses could not be taken up at the time. These included the Rosicrucian impulses of Johann Valentin Andreae, the Thirty Years' War, the true impulses of the French Revolution and Napoleon's unforeseen violent actions. In Germany, the liberal impulses could not be taken up and so what should have come about; could not become reality. In this context, particular reference should be made to Kaspar Hauser as the hereditary prince of Baden and to Karl Julius Schröer. In fact, the beginnings of threefolding could and should have been realised and “*if he [Schröer] had been able to achieve intellectuality and unite it with the spirituality of Plato: anthroposophy would have come.*”⁷ This would have resulted in a completely different starting point for Rudolf Steiner's work in every respect.

“After a difficult inner struggle”

Instead, in 1923 Rudolf Steiner stood before the ruins of the building and the Society, in the aftermath of the First World War and the foreseeable threat of National Socialism and thus the catastrophe of Central Europe.

It became impossible to consolidate the Society in 1923. Despite all the preparations for the founding of an “International Anthroposophical Society”, Rudolf Steiner considered withdrawing just five weeks before Christmas. He had doubts as to “*whether it was still possible to continue with the Society at all*”. “*He complained that no one seemed to understand what he wanted at all and that it might be necessary to continue working with only very few people within a strict association. It made an almost painful impression on the few people who were present during this conversation. They experienced, without being able to see through everything in detail, how they had come to a point in the spiritual development of humanity where earlier forms of communi-*”⁷ GA 238, 1991, P. 163.

ty were no longer able to carry spiritual content, where only a completely new impulse could make it possible to move on.”⁸

He decided to attend the Christmas conference “*after a difficult inner struggle*”⁹, but on the eve of the Christmas conference, he warned those present: “*It is true that things have to be taken very, very seriously, very seriously at the moment. Otherwise, what I have often spoken about, I would have to withdraw from the Anthroposophical Society.*”¹⁰

However, the re-founding of the Anthroposophical Society resulted in something different from the “International Anthroposophical Society” prepared during the year, which would have been an “*international centre*” in which “*the individual national Societies would unite to form an international Society with its headquarters in Dornach*”.¹¹ This would have been headed by an elected General Secretary - not Rudolf Steiner.¹²

Whereas in the summer it had still been requested that “*the delegates should arrive at Christmas well informed about the views of their friends at home and armed with fruitful suggestions for the shaping of the International Anthroposophical Society*”¹³, Ita Wegman explained in a letter to Toni Völker on 3 Dec. 1923 the completely changed approach:

*“The matter [the founding of the international Society] will be done very differently this time than in the past with the founding of the individual national Societies. It is now Dr Steiner who wants to take the whole thing into his own hands; he will even chair and manage the whole thing as he sees fit. He will also draw up the statutes, and the business of the international Society will be conducted under his direct leadership with the help of employees who live here in Dornach and are personally elected by Dr Steiner. Proposals from others are therefore out of the question here, so the national Societies only have to join or not join and only have to deal with the question of whether yes or no.”*¹⁴

A rescue attempt...

Even from these few references it is recognisable that there could be no question of a further development of the Society. Rudolf Steiner expressed this particularly clearly in May 1924: “*And one can already have the justified feeling that we were further along in 1914 than we will perhaps be again after twenty or thirty years from today.*”¹⁵ The question posed at the foundation in 1913, based on an occult impulse, as to whether the “Society

⁸ Willem Zeylmans van Emmichoven: Development and Intellectual Struggle 1923 - 1939. Stuttgart 1935, p. 10f.

⁹ GA 260, P. 39.

¹⁰ GA 232, 1998, P. 234.

¹¹ GA 259, P. 526.

¹² GA 259, 571f.

¹³ GA 259, P. 571.

¹⁴ 259 Page:865.

¹⁵ 260a Page:483.

would continue to develop *through the strength it had gained in its members up to that point*”,¹⁶ had led to a negative result. With regard to the School of Spiritual Science, it was pointed out at the Christmas conference that there were already three Classes in 1914, which was not the case in 1924 and is still not the case today. And with regard to the public: in 1917, he had already stated that esoteric instructions would also have to be public in future. Hella Wiesberger: “*At that time, he categorically refused to continue giving esoteric advice in private conversations. In future, everything would have to be done in the full light of day. There was enough training material available; one should only read ‘How to gain knowledge of the higher worlds’.*”¹⁷ Consider further what Rudolf Steiner had made publicly available in his books on esotericism - e.g. in “The Spiritual Guidance of Man ...” with the two Jesus boys and the Egyptian angels who remained behind and who are active today. It was a necessity of the times; everything had to be public now: “*Today’s world can no longer tolerate any immersion in anything secret.*”¹⁸

The indications and statements that the Christmas Conference and the re-founding were an attempt to save the Society from *final disintegration* and *ahrimanic influences* are also abundantly clear. However, there is no evidence to support the conclusion that the form that emerged at that time was intended to last beyond Rudolf Steiner’s death: no indications, no succession plan for the School of Spiritual Science, no succession plan for the Society and no response to these questions even after a direct enquiry.¹⁹ The reorganisation was based on concrete realities, in the hope that he would have been *able to carry out his intentions*.²⁰ Not those of the other board members, and certainly not the intentions of unintended successors. Remember that the other board members had not been prepared to take over the management of the Society and that he had not given any corresponding instructions!

This organisation of the Christmas Conference Society was societal in the sense of a living organism - with Rudolf Steiner as initiator and leader. This form was not based on principles, not on dogmas, but what was described in the statutes was based “*purely on the factual and human*”.²¹

However, what are we doing if we think that the form of that time is a model for an anthroposophical society and believe that we can and must derive today’s organisation and the relationship between membership and leadership from it? Are we not doing exactly the opposite of what Rudolf Steiner did? We are *not* starting from the realities of today - but from those of the past, we are

16 GA 260a, p. 204.

17 Hella Wiesberger : «Rudolf Steiners esoterische Lehrtätigkeit», Dornach 1999, p. 48ff.

18 GA 260, P. 92.

19 GA 260a, p. 695.

20 GA 260a, p. 183.

21 GA 260, P. 41.

preserving them, declaring them to be dogmas and principles - and believe that we can derive healing social forms from them - according to which life should then be organised!

If we want to refer to the Christmas Conference in our social organisation, we should also shape it from the realities, the facts, the real people - in short: from the living conditions, impulses and initiatives of all members - *as they exist today* - and not fall back on elements from the past that were not even intended for our circumstances.

It is precisely the shaping of realities, the living, that could make possible what Ita Wegman had in mind:

By people who have connected themselves with anthroposophy finding each other and uniting to become a member of the true spiritual association. It now depends on the individual and they must then together form a higher union out of their development, which has its roots in the spiritual world.

More detailed information on the quality and essence of the impulses of the Christmas Conference and the Christmas Conference Society and how we could build and shape social structures from them in: “*Why we need new social structures*”, Eva Lohmann-Heck. www.wtg-99.com/Mitglieder-Organ or printed: thomas.heck@posteo.ch.

Thomas Heck

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Results from the survey

In view of the significant decline in membership numbers, particularly in the Central European core area, and the many announcements of resignations that we have received personally, we asked our readers a few months ago about the reasons for this. We do not know what information the Society’s management has about the reasons for resignations. We can assume that management is aware of at least some of the reasons for resignations. But this is not a topic that is communicated to the membership.

The magnitude of the resignations of around 3% per year and the resulting ‘loss of members’ overall is worrying and must clearly be seen as a crisis in organised anthroposophy. “The Society is anaemic,” was the assessment of a member of the Society’s management in Dornach. Because in fact many committed and initiative people are leaving the Society - or not joining in the first place. In addition, the resignations are certainly only the

tip of the iceberg, because there is also an unknown but certainly not a small number of 'internal resignations' - because you don't just resign from an anthroposophical society. The situation in Germany has already been briefly described in Newsletter 63 .

Starting with this issue, excerpts from the responses, some of which are quite detailed, will be published in the near future and we would like to express our sincere thanks for the trust and openness shown to us through the responses.

However, the reasons given did not come as a surprise; they are largely identical and consistent with precisely the problems and criticisms that are also seen by current members, which have also been reported in these newsletters and elsewhere, and which have increasingly led to motions and member initiatives in recent years. And these are mostly central issues that are an expression of the crisis in which our Society finds itself - both internally with the membership and externally in the representation of anthroposophy. The responses to the survey are not the only evidence of this.

Solutions for some of these issues are currently being sought in the members' forums - together with two members of the Executive Board - a pleasing development with potential for the future.

Thomas Heck

From the answers

The responses (some of which are excerpts) are reproduced without comment for your own judgement, regardless of whether we agree with the statements or not. These are individual views and do not claim to be representative. However, the points of criticism mostly fit into the spectrum already mentioned. An overview and compilation of the aspects of the crisis in which the General Anthroposophical Society (GAS) and significant parts of the anthroposophical movement find themselves will be made available next year.

The answers are reproduced here anonymously.

Answer 1

"The further developments of the GAS in the direction of ingratiation and affiliation with the WHO is incomprehensible to me, as is the inclusion of the One Health Organisation. These are all forces that work against humanity and spiritual science, which unfortunately people here are turning a blind eye to. The unclear stance on the coronavirus vaccination can only astonish and even horrify me. Such an important movement is abolishing itself through an approach that I find incomprehensible.

The Anthroposophical Society should take the criticisms more seriously and have the courage to take a democratic step towards a new way of dealing with the current members. It should become more aware of its potential instead of clinging to dubious developments."

Answer 2

"I experience time and again that the members are not taken seriously by the management and that actions are only carried out under pressure. Example: Ita Wegman's rehabilitation. The motion had come from the membership and was postponed for a year for flimsy reasons (there could still be inheritance uncertainty or something like that). When this [the rehabilitation] was included on the agenda the following year, it gave me the impression that it came from the Executive Board. The handling of Corona was also one-sided, cowardly and untruthful on the part of the Medical Section. People are allowed to make mistakes, but they must be able to admit them and not cover them up with silence. I was disappointed by the behaviour of the so-called esoteric Board and the Society that Rudolf Steiner spoke of at Christmas 1923 is still in heaven and unfortunately not in Dornach. I am extremely grateful to all members who are able to formulate disagreements clearly so that even unstudied people can know what is going on. Anthroposophy is a matter close to my heart."

Answer 3

"I have subscribed to 'Ein Nachrichtenblatt' from the very beginning. I have noticed that in too many cases the Board simply does not answer the questions of Mr Tüscher and others. I consider it a mortal sin not to answer in a debate in the common search for truth, especially when it is a debate between anthroposophists. ... The attitude of the GAS/Medical Section to the corona crisis has deeply shocked and disappointed me. To my delight, I know quite a number of anthroposophists who see a clear connection between all that Steiner and other anthroposophists have said and written about evil in our time and the corona crisis. ... One more general comment: as you know, anthroposophy has everything to strongly reinforce resistance to the mainstream. I see the GAS's conformism as a protective strategy in defence of the established anthroposophical institutions and the interests associated with them. The de facto cancellation of membership is therefore inevitable and will only intensify in the future if the GAS continues to pursue this course."

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