
What *else* ist happening at the Goetheanum!

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The 1923 Christmas Conference as a source of renewal

A “beginning of a world-turning-point”

was to be the new foundation of the Anthroposophical Society at the Christmas Conference. What powerful words.

In the hundred years since then, an infinite amount has been written by human souls in search of a deeper understanding, and even more has been thought and felt.

And the events of that time really do have inexhaustible depths, because they were born out of Rudolf Steiner’s act of sacrifice. It can therefore be understood all the more deeply the further we advance in our understanding of his nature and his mission.¹ Only at the very beginning, and in this context only by way of a sketch, will some aspects be touched upon.

Rudolf Steiner spoke of anthroposophy having been transformed from an earthly fact into a cosmic fact through the Christmas Conference. Even if it were no longer cultivated by people on earth, it could not be lost in the cosmos.

“If this Christmas Conference is only taken in the same way that people liked to take earlier conferences, then it will gradually evaporate, it will lose its essence, and it would have been better not to have gathered at all. For the spiritual has the property that if it is not held on to, it disappears, obviously not disappears in the cosmos, but disappears for the place where it is no longer nurtured. It then looks for other places in the cosmos. And for something like our Christmas Conference, we are not dependent on what happens within the earthly realm. So you must not imagine that what was [predisposed to the Christmas Conference, if it] evaporates through the non-execution of the impulses, has to appear somewhere else on Earth. That is not necessary. It can seek refuge in completely different worlds. - So everything depends on finding the opportunity to take great care of this Christmas Conference, to really absorb its content.”²

What happened in this Christmas gathering that it would take on such enormous significance and be guarded and preserved by cosmic entities if people were not faithful to it?

Humanity was at a crossroads. The First World War had already prevented “a wave of spirituality” from flowing into

¹ See www.wtg-99.com/Rundbrief_58 and “Why we need new social structures” (<https://wtg-99.com/Neue-Sozialstrukturen>). The two post-mortem books by Sergei Prokofieff are particularly noteworthy: “Rudolf Steiner and the Masters of Esoteric Christianity” and “Rudolf Steiner, Fragment of a Spiritual Biography”

² GA 260a, p. 92.



Christmas Sun, Eva Lohmann, 2000

earthly civilisation. Now Rudolf Steiner saw the coming catastrophe for Central Europe and made the grave statement that *at the end of the century either humanity would stand “at the grave of all civilisation or at the beginning of that age when in the souls of people who combine intelligence with spirituality in their hearts, the Michael battle will be fought out in favour of the Michael impulse.”*³ The question arises: Where do we stand in this respect?

Rudolf Steiner made the sacrifice of associating himself with the completely derelict Society in order to make a “*beginning of a new era*” possible after all. For - as has already been pointed out several times - he needed an Anthroposophical Society as an instrument of his work. Only in this way could anthroposophy have led to a radical cultural renewal. In the fateful year of 1923, Rudolf Steiner spoke of how the Society itself *had become a serious obstacle to the (supersensible) anthroposophical movement*. And what do you do with these opposing forces? “*...one absorbs them, takes them into one’s own body, and in a certain way they are thereby eliminated from the world.*”⁴ A truly Manichean act of sacrifice.

He united his I with the Society and took into his physical

³ GA 240, P. 183.

⁴ GA 264, P. 408.

body everything that had been caused by the neglect and failure and the unresolved karma of the Society's members. He carried it up into the spiritual world and had to suffer "the most dreadful setbacks"⁵ in that it had to be rejected by the high spiritual powers. It was probably setbacks of this kind, from the work of the opposing powers through the unconscious of the members against him, which robbed him of his strength right into his physical body. The deeper causes of his so-called illness will have to be sought here. - And it is of great importance to have a correct picture of his death in our consciousness: Rudolf Steiner *did not* die of illness, but quite consciously left the earthly plane. Ita Wegman testified to this. "Leaving was like a miracle. As if it were self-evident, he left. It was as if the die had been cast at the last moment. ... He looked quietly in front of him for a while, said a few more kind words to me, closed his eyes with consciousness and folded his hands. - and left his body."⁶

From Ephesus to the Christmas Conference

The construction of the first Goetheanum was the result of the labour and financial support of hundreds of active members who had lovingly carved and painted the building with their own hands. "A building shone down from the Dornach hill that had anthroposophical will and anthroposophical willingness to make sacrifices built into every cubic centimetre of wood and every cubic centimetre of stone. This moral substance was built into the first Goetheanum."⁷ This active love had filled the building with living substance, had made it into the body of a living being. This being died in a fire on New Year's Eve 1922. In the words of grief and pain, Rudolf Steiner speaks of a being "...our dear Goetheanum has been burnt down..."⁸ And in connection with the fact that it could not be ceremonially opened (for certain reasons), "...the Goetheanum has died away before..."⁹

However, it was above all Rudolf Steiner's own life forces that flowed into this building, the "built anthroposophy", to such an extent that the fire in a certain way tore his etheric body away from him. Ita Wegman wrote "the Goetheanum was the condensed word of Rudolf Steiner, and his own etheric body had fused with the work of art, was inseparably connected to it." And after the fire, Rudolf Steiner said to her: "Compared to other people, I have actually already died on Earth ... My ego and astral body direct my physical body and complement the etheric"¹⁰

Anna Samweber's view on the night of the fire, 31 Dec. 1922, seems like a testimony to this fact. At the moment when the blazing fire caused the dome to collapse with a roar at exactly midnight - she saw "the building high above the site of the fire, glowing white." - And she looked round

for Rudolf Steiner and saw him "surrounded by a huge light-white aura" ... and knew immediately "something is happening now between the doctor and the burning building ...". Was this the moment when Rudolf Steiner was abandoned by his etheric body? Where the essence of the building took it into the spiritual world?

The spiritual Goetheanum that had passed through the fire radiated from the cosmos back into the anthroposophical movement, carrying within it the forces of Rudolf Steiner's life body! With the re-establishment of the Anthroposophical Society at Christmas 1923, it could have risen anew as a *social temple on Earth* through Rudolf Steiner's leadership and his ego as 'master builder in the etheric'.

A mystery and a karmic connection prevailed here, stretching from the temple at Ephesus to the first Goetheanum, originally planned as a "St John's building".

"Just as the fire of Ephesus was used by Aristotle and Alexander when it flared up anew in their hearts, but first flared up in the ether outside, from which it again carried the secrets to them, which could then be grasped in the simplest terms, just as the fire of Ephesus could be used there, so it is incumbent upon us, and we will also be able, to utilise that which - one may say it in all modesty - has also carried out into the ether as the flames of the Goetheanum that which has been willed through Anthroposophy and is to continue to be willed. ...

What was more or less an earthly matter before, worked out, established as an earthly matter, has been carried out with the flames into the universe. Precisely because this misfortune has befallen us, we may say, recognising the consequences of this misfortune, that we now understand that we may not merely represent an earthly matter, but a matter of the wide etheric world in which the spirit lives. For the matter of the Goetheanum is a matter of the vast ether in which the spirit-filled wisdom of the world lives. It has been carried out into the etheric world, and we may allow ourselves to be penetrated by the Goetheanum impulses as coming in from the cosmos.

We can take it as we like; let's take it as an image. However, this image signifies a profound truth. And this profound truth is expressed in simple terms by saying that the anthroposophical work has been imbued with an esoteric trait since the Christmas impulse. **This esoteric trait is there because that which was earthly, through that which worked in the physical fire, but as astral light, which radiates out into the cosmos - because this in turn works back into the impulses of the anthroposophical movement, if only we are able to absorb these impulses**"¹¹

The formation of the Foundation Stone

The invitation to the Christmas Conference emphasised that the first two days were the most important. The talk on 24 December was a moving and awakening introduction in which the following words, among others, were heard:

11 GA 233a, p. 166, emphasis ELH.

5 GA 260a, p. 806, Memorial Address for Edith Maryon 3 May 1924 and GA 261, p. 306.

6 Peter Selg, "Ita Wegman, Remembrance of Rudolf Steiner", p 46.

7 GA 259, P. 151.

8 GA 257, P. 107.

9 GA 36, P. 329.

10 Peter Selg, "Ita Wegman, Memory of Rudolf Steiner", pp. 35 and 36.

“This anthroposophical movement is not an earthly service, this anthroposophical movement with all its details is a service of the gods, a worship of God. And as such we want to take it into our hearts at the beginning of this conference, we want to inscribe deeply in our hearts that this anthroposophical movement wants to connect the soul of each individual who dedicates himself to it with the primal sources of all that is human in the world today, that this anthroposophical movement wants to lead man to that final enlightenment which is satisfying for him for the time being in the development of humanity on earth, which can clothe itself in the words of the revelation that has begun: Yes, that is what I am as a human being, as a God-ordained human being on earth, as a God-ordained human being in the universe.”¹²

Again and again the words rang out from the hearts into which everything may now be absorbed. The actual laying of the Foundation Stone took place on 25 December. Even the beginning was unusual: the doors were closed by Rudolf Steiner himself at 10 a.m. and were not opened for those arriving late. He then stepped up to the lectern and struck a certain rhythm with a hammer. For his esoteric students, this was the familiar sign for the opening of an esoteric lesson. It will also have signalled the special nature of the moment to all other participants.

Those present were thus called upon to rise from their everyday consciousness, to step across the threshold from the sensory world into the etheric and spiritual. It meant the requirement not only to think and feel along with the rich content of the words, but also to place oneself in a living spiritual event.

Instead of a physical foundation stone, as Rudolf Steiner had designed for the first Goetheanum alone, *an etheric foundation stone* is formed here in community and yet individually in each individual soul.

Of the “formative substance”

If you read the Foundation Stone speech with this in mind and inwardly follow what is said in words, you can feel guided step by step, in an ever new tripartite rhythm, into your own threefold being and the threefold soul forces active in it. Guided by Rudolf Steiner, it becomes an individual path into a ‘fulfilment of being’. Whoever realises inwardly what Rudolf Steiner’s words speak to, arrives in active co-experience at the moment when Rudolf Steiner brings together the spiritual forces from the heights, the Christ forces from the periphery and the fatherly creative forces from the depths into a formative substance.¹³ - It is easy to overlook this enigmatic word about a *formative substance*. What substance might we be talking about here? A living substance that is simultaneously filled with formative forces - is it ‘only’ the etheric that is being spoken of here?

The living substance seems to emerge from the harmonious unification of the three soul forces, which are at the same

¹² GA 260, P. 35.

¹³ GA 260, P.64.

time those that move and form the etheric body in accordance with the archetype, in harmony with the world forces brought together from the cosmos by Rudolf Steiner. The transformation of the astral body into the Spirit Self and of the life body into the Life Spirit becomes possible in the course of time from the Rosicrucian path of training and self-knowledge, from the “*living permeation of the heart with Anthroposophia*”. - Does the Foundation Stone consist of this transformed soul and life substance, which then becomes a creative one?

“Thanks to the emanations of the marvellous etheric body of Christian Rosenkreutz, it was possible to begin a completely new way of looking at the world. What the Rosicrucians have been working on up to our time is both outer and inner work. The purpose of the outer work was to find



Community, Eva Lohmann, 1994

*out what lies behind the Maya of matter. The aim was to investigate the Maya of matter. **The entire macrocosm is based on an ether-macrocosm, an etheric body, just as the human being has an etheric body.** There is a certain boundary transition from the coarser to the finer substance. Let us look at the boundary between physical and etheric substance. Nothing else in the world is similar to what lies between the physical and the etheric substance. It is neither gold, nor silver, nor lead, nor copper. We have something that cannot be compared with any other physical substance, but it is the essence of everything. We have a substance that is contained in all other physical substances, so all physical substances can be regarded as modifications of this one substance. **The Rosicrucians endeavoured to view this substance clairvoyantly.** They saw the preparation, the formation of such a vision in an increased effectiveness of the moral powers of the soul, which then made this substance visible. They saw the power for this vision in the moral forc-*

es of the soul. This substance was really seen and discovered by the Rosicrucians. They found that this substance lives in a certain form in the world, in the macrocosm as well as in the human being. Out in the world, outside the human being, they worshipped it as the great garment, as the dress of the macrocosm. **In the human being they saw it arising when there was a harmonious interaction between thinking and willing.** They saw the forces of will not only in the human being, but also in the macrocosm, for example in thunder and lightning. In the same way, they saw the forces of thinking on the one hand in man and then outside in the world, in the rainbow, in the dawn. The Rosicrucians sought the power to achieve such harmony between will and thought in their own souls in the emanations of this etheric body of the Thirteenth, Christian Rosenkrenz. ¹⁴

And the words from a lecture in the cycle on “Initiation cognition” seem like a continuation of this presentation:

“There is something that underlies all world organisation... Only up to the Middle Ages does something of a knowledge of what underlies all external substances as a supersensible external substance that can hardly be called matter, in that in the Middle Ages there is talk of the so-called quintessence, the fifth entity, alongside the four other elements: Earth, water, air, fire - the quintessence”. ¹⁵

Is the substance of the Foundation Stone something related to this?

On the one hand, this creation of the etheric Foundation Stone was only possible because Rudolf Steiner led this path as a high initiate and bearer of Christ. On the other hand, people could only have formed the Foundation Stone individually from those etheric forces of the heart that emerged from their purified, christened soul and life forces permeated by the ego. - Was this the beginning of the creation of a new quintessence? The time of Christ’s return in the etheric had begun and it was to be a “beginning of the world turning point”. This could happen in the human soul in a Christmas mood, in “humility, devotion and willingness to sacrifice”, the three virtues that Rudolf Steiner mentioned three times at the laying of the Foundation Stone of the first Goetheanum on 20 September 1913.

The Foundation Stone meditation appears like an *astral shell* for the etheric foundation stone. In meditation, in living through the words, the etheric foundation stone can be renewed, revitalised and nurtured. However, it is not only in meditation, but also in all devotional activity from anthroposophy, when it is experienced as service to God, that we have the opportunity to renew the Foundation Stone substance. ¹⁶

The germ of life

Then the people heard the words that now address the community that is to be formed: “And the right soil into which

¹⁴ GA 130, P. 65.

¹⁵ GA 227, lecture 22 August 1922.

¹⁶ The lecture “The etherisation of the blood”, GA 130, also provides an essential deepening.

we must lay today’s foundation stone, the right soil, is our hearts in their harmonious co-operation, in their good will, imbued with love, to carry the anthroposophical will through the world together.” ¹⁷

A new community had been founded, it was to become a social body for anthroposophy, imbued with the common life of anthroposophy and following Rudolf Steiner’s ego-impulses, grasping them in freedom. For this social corporeality, the events of the Christmas Conference could only be a beginning, like the laying of a seed, like a spiritual ‘procreation’, because the further formation of the living ‘body’ should have been a communal endeavour. - Hence Rudolf Steiner’s numerous warnings that this conference should not be taken like others, that it would only receive its content through what people do in it from now on - indeed, that it would evaporate if the impulse was not seized. - *It was a seed of life for a living being* - and the time limit was nine months, the free space gained through Rudolf Steiner’s sacrifice, free from the direct onslaught of the demons that lurked if the Michael impulse was not sufficiently absorbed. ¹⁸

The third sacrifice

Why was the deadline just nine months? Could it be that we have to take it literally here that Anthroposophy is a human being, albeit a supersensible being, the true human being for whom the Anthroposophical Society was to form the living, animated organism? Through a special act of freedom, through the takeover of Karl Julius Schröer’s karmic task, renouncing his own task, anthroposophy had come into the world as a spiritual being through Rudolf Steiner. ¹⁹ Now he had placed himself at the head of this Society, which was to become the body of this “human being”. If the “germ of life” was conceived into the community at the Christmas Conference, then the period of quiet maturing and formation should have begun in the nine months that followed, the formation of the body still entirely in a protected space. In order to then “give birth” to a strong Society that is also recognisable to the public at Michaelmas, a community of active, initiative members who, out of the harmony of their hearts and fruitful cooperation, carry anthroposophy into the world and represent it to the world.

We know that this did not materialise. On the eve of Michaelmas, Rudolf Steiner was only able to give a short speech before his strength failed him. The last address of 28 September 1924 had to remain unfinished, Rudolf Steiner was no longer able to leave his sickbed. His last call in this address for at least 4 x 12 people, which he would have needed in order to continue working, also remained unheard.

What Rudolf Steiner’s Christmas Conference was supposed to save for humanity through his third great sacrifice failed due to a lack of understanding - or should we say a

¹⁷ GA 260, P. 64.

¹⁸ Peter Selg “Ita Wegman, Remembrance of Rudolf Steiner”, p 40.

¹⁹ Thomas Meyer: «W.J. Stein / Rudolf Steiner, Dokumentation eines wegweisenden Zusammenwirkens», p. 298.

lack of selflessness on the part of the people? - Instead of a Christian renewal movement with the power to spiritually transform civilisation, the Sorathic counter-impulse of the brown movement began its triumphal march in Germany and Central Europe's cultural mission was almost completely destroyed down to its very roots.

*“The German spirit has not finished
What he should create in world- becoming,
It lives hopefully in worries about the future,
It hopes for future deeds full of life, -
In the depths of its being, it feels a powerful
Something that has yet to mature. -
How can the power of the enemy
Revitalise the desire for its end,
As long as life reveals itself to him,
which keeps him creating at the roots of his being?”²⁰*

Even if it was no longer an external war in 1923, there was still a powerful spiritual battle raging in the background. And we have been witnessing for decades how Germany (and Central Europe) have forgotten and betrayed their true mission of forming a spiritual centre and - as Rudolf Steiner predicted - have sunk into becoming a colony of the USA and a compliant tool of Western politics.

What Rudolf Steiner foresaw with concern as a possibility has materialised: that the *Anthroposophical Society* “could sink back into a latent state for decades and longer, I would like to say, and be taken up again later. **But immense things would be lost for the development of humanity ...**”²¹

Even if a thin trickle of water could be carried through, the connection to the spiritual world was not completely severed and it can seem like a miracle that, thanks to numerous friends who worked from the living anthroposophical substance, the anthroposophical movement and Society were able to recover after the war to such an extent that a certain blossoming, cultural effectiveness and expansion could be achieved from the end of the 1970s, it remains true: true cultural transformation and renewal has *not* been possible, so that the question remains: Where do we stand today? How close are we to “*the grave of all civilisation*”?

The decline in the influx into the training centres and institutions and the dilution of the substance already began in the 1990s and we have been in a crisis again for years; indeed, we are currently at a crossroads of the same magnitude as back then. And once again the spiritual test facing the souls of anthroposophists is whether they recognise the impending danger to a sufficient degree and see through the methods and masks of the opposing powers - or whether, as then, “*the inner opponents of anthroposophy*”²², of whom Rudolf Steiner spoke in September 1923, will win the day: *Naivety, illusion and a lack of discernment* - especially in relation to world events.

20 GA 64, 14 January 1915.

21 GA 258, P. 171

22 Quoted from Christoph Lindenberg, «Rudolf Steiner, eine Chronik», Stuttgart 1988, p. 537.

“Anthroposophy is a service to God”

It is deeply connected with the impulse of the Christmas Conference that we cultivate relationships with the spiritual beings of the hierarchies and leaders of humanity in an increasingly lively and concrete way. According to Rudolf Steiner, “*Christian Rosenkreutz moved into the carpentry workshop (Schreinerei) with his flock during the Christmas Conference*”.²³

We are also reminded of Rudolf Steiner's touching words *about the being of anthroposophy, which walks among us like an invisible person and wants to be asked for advice about our actions*. And we can be certain that this will also be the case for the high spiritual being of Rudolf Steiner. Lili Kolisko passed on his words: “*If even two people work selflessly and purely for the cause after my death, I will be able to work through them.*”²⁴

The sayings of Rudolf Steiner in the box on the next page may serve as a guide in this sense, also for the Holy Nights.

So may we succeed, after a hundred years, in finding the true wellspring of the Christmas Conference in order to draw from it the impulses for reorganisation that are so urgently needed for our General Anthroposophical Society. For what happens within it may still have an archetypal and exemplary effect on the world - however small and insignificant our Society may seem on the outside. Is there perhaps a danger that we underestimate our responsibility? In 1935, Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede foresaw that their exclusion from the Board would have the effect of breaking a spiritual dam and that the Nazi movement would then be unstoppable. Today, we are once again dealing with the threat of increasingly totalitarian structures worldwide and the imminent incarnation of Ahriman. Should we not become a role model for contemporary social structures? This could be possible from the wellspring of the Christmas Conference.

Eva Lohmann-Heck

Further explanations and concrete proposals in “*Why we need new social structures*” - see next page.

23 Margarethe Kirchner-Bockholt, «Die Menschheitsaufgabe Rudolf Steiners und Ita Wegmans», p. 94.

24 Lili Kolisko «Eugen Kolisko, ein Lebensbild», p. 159, privately printed.

We wish our readers a Christmas full of light and fulfilment and a blessed time of the Holy Nights.
We would like to thank you for your interest in our work and for your support.

Eva Lohmann-Heck and Thomas Heck

To get in the mood for the Holy Nights

“True meditation ... is a realisation of the spiritual will that carries the spirit of the times (Zeitgeist) within it. Where such meditation is practised, a spiritual force is able to have an effect on earthly events. Spiritual worlds want to have an effect on earthly events today, but they can only do so if space is created for them through human meditation.”¹

“Meditating means opening your soul to the master so that he can give it impulses at night.”²

“Let what you have received [through meditation] continue to have an effect, let it resonate in your meditation, then the spiritual powers of the world will flow into you. The world is permeated by spiritual currents that emanate from the great masters of wisdom and the harmony of sensations. The masters continually pour out streams of love and wisdom upon humanity, but the souls of men are not always ready and open to receive. The words of meditation, however, are magic words that open the gates of the soul so that divine life can enter.”³

What is “good will” in reality? Herbert Hahn on this:

“For the occultist, will means acting out of the spirit, harmonising oneself as a meditator with the hierarchies. In this sense, restless activity, especially if it is not in harmony with Rudolf Steiner’s intentions or the spiritual world, as has happened time and again, has nothing to do with will.”⁴

Rudolf Steiner: “Nothing but devotion to the spiritual world can make any work in the world fruitful.”⁵

Notes from an early Esoteric Hour of 13 Dec. 1905, words about the Holy Night of 24 to 25 December:

“[Rudolf Steiner] then spoke about Christmas and the importance of the festivals of the year; that the sun is at its lowest at Christmas and begins its ascent again on the 25th and that on this night the masters of the white lodge have a meeting in which they pour out the solar power of the coming year on people who want to give themselves completely to them, give up their personality completely and ask them for strength. When you celebrate Christmas in this way, when you ask the masters in this way, then they send their power into you on this 25th December so that the master’s power works through you.”⁶

1 GA 266/III, P.434.

2 GA 266/III, P. 344.

3 GA 266/I, P. 285.

4 Gerhard v. Beckerath «Der Leidensweg Rudolf Steiners», p. 192.

5 GA 265, P. 127.

6 GA 266/I, P. 118.



Why we need new social structures

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