

The Youth Section and the Anthroposophical Society

When young people find their way to anthroposophy, it is not uncommon for them to have difficulties in relating to the anthroposophical society with same inner enthusiasm. Maybe they reject the anthroposophical society as antiquated or having misfired. They may even become members of the society and yet retain an uneasy feeling that something is not quite as it should be. At any rate they do not approach it as enthusiastically as they do anthroposophy and Rudolf Steiner's entire life's work.

When these young people learn to know of the christmas foundation meeting of 1923/24 and especially of the foundation stone meditation, it is often experienced as a spiritual recognition of something which they have already taken part in. Deep inner certainty dawns and true warmth and enthusiasm in all its purity arises. The personal goals of life attain new dimensions. For many, however, the feeling of unease towards the general anthroposophical society remains, even though the foundation stone meditation is the foundation of this very society.

How can one love and respect the foundation stone and at the same time reject the building which belongs to it? A discrepancy is clearly apparent.

We must try and follow a fruitful path and avoid leaping to false conclusions. Both the resigned attitude of thinking that the anthroposophical society has failed in its mission, and the arrogant attitude of supposing that everything is, and always was as it should be, negate important opportunities for the anthroposophical Movement.

The christmas foundation meeting with the foundation stone meditation as its central core is a living and developing process. The impulse is so much directed towards the future that it has essentially a seed character. The building which shall be erected on this foundation stone, the spiritual building, is composed of building stones formed by the concrete work and cultivation of anthroposophical life in all different groups and groupings in the society. The building has a truly spiritual life and is not an institutional organisation. Half a year after the christmas foundation meeting, R. Steiner said in Torquay (Karma lectures vol. 6, GA 240):

"Now it may truly be said, with reference to all the spiritual powers who are related to the anthroposophical movement, that those connections between the spiritual worlds and that which should flow through the anthroposophical movement as their manifestation, have streamed together more intimately and more incisively than was the case before. Thus it is a fact that of the two results which could have occurred, that one has taken place which is most favourable to the further development of the anthroposophical movement. One may even say: Those spiritual powers from whom we have our revelations, have steadily looked upon us, since the founding of the Anthroposophical Society at the Goetheanum, with an even greater degree of goodwill than was the case before. Thus it became possible to take away a heavy burden from the anthroposophical society." --- "If one approaches the Vorstand in this way, with understanding, then it will be seen now – of course everything will proceed slowly, you must have patience my dear friends; but even if it proceeds slowly – every single intention of the christmas meeting will in time, be put into effect. "

Here speaks someone not as one convinced that everything has miscarried nor yet as one who believes the task to be completed. For it is a very slowly process, one which will grow on into the future. Through the christmas foundation meeting, it has come about for the first time in history that an esoteric school forms at the same time the core of a completely open and public society. But how is it possible for esoteric life to penetrate a public society in our time? Is it not in danger of rapidly evaporating? Every organisation which grows large and indeed becomes a world organisation tends to become an institution thus being able to perpetuate its existence even without any spiritual life. Each time this occurs within the anthroposophical society, barriers are created which place obstacles in the path of the anthroposophical movement. Forms, which, when they are created, act beneficially, can always become hindrances if they are simply perpetuated without being continually renewed from within. Perhaps a reason why so many young people do not wish to connect themselves with the anthroposophical society is that they continually perceive such sclerotic tendencies.

Such a situation may easily lead to the conclusion that the society is no longer necessary. It may be argued that anthroposophy should be sought for anew and nourished at every moment and in every place without relying on the external form of a society. It is only too easy to swing from the one extreme situation of a bureaucratic institution, to the other extreme where not even a spiritual organism is wanted. From being a well-organised "citizen" of the society, one becomes a pilgrim, whereby each individual may well bear the living spirit

within him, while neglecting the task of a continuous and ordered co-work which an organism of world humanity demands. The christmas foundation meeting and the foundation stone meditation together form the seeds of life for such an organism of world humanity. It is the social path of the future which opens up here between the well-organised "citizen" and the "pilgrim" who will not be organised.

This path, however, demands much for its realisation. This task will only gain a world-wide meaning and take off as such, if people from the most varied backgrounds and predispositions can unite and work together. If one can only work and only wants to work with those who from the start share the same style of working and the same attitude of soul, then one may achieve great things. It will however remain weak and insignificant in comparison with the tremendous tasks of the present. The polarisation of humanity, the east-west tension, the polarity of north and south; all these work destructively until the polarising forces are grasped on a higher level where they can begin to work together in a spiritual organism. The foundation stone meditation is the profound source out of which forces stream which can overcome all such polarisations. And here we see that we have hardly begun. The history of the anthroposophical society makes it abundantly clear how difficult it is to bring together the manifold human streams even within the anthroposophical movement. Every polarisation of groups of people within the anthroposophical society is a sure sign of our inadequacy. Many young people reject the so-called old splits and quarrels within the society in so far as they will have nothing to do with them. One simply wants to work out of anthroposophy for the tasks of the present and the goals of the future. And suddenly one finds oneself torn apart in a similar situation in which one can work with one's best friends only under the greatest of difficulties.

On another level similar situations have developed time and again within the various vocations. Everyone is clearly aware that everything has arisen out of anthroposophy, out of a common source, and that it must all work together if it is to unfold its full powers, only in the rarest of cases does a deliberate intention exist towards isolationism. But the very activity within a field of work tends to override an awareness of the whole, if the unifying organism of the anthroposophical society is insufficiently cared for. And the same applies to geographically separated regions.

But how can this world-wide cooperation ever be achieved concretely when everyone already appears to have far too much to do in his own place and is being continually asked too much of? To erect this world-wide spiritual building as a living organism means taking up a human and superhuman task. An organism is a unity while at the same time is differentiated within its organs. Periphery and centre work together without the one outwardly directing the other.

Before the christmas foundation meeting R. Steiner founded the various national societies as independent groups of the yet to be created General Anthroposophical Society. When this impulse then came at christmas 1923/24, the national societies came together within this all encompassing organism, with the hope that the spiritual qualities of the different regions would work together in the same way as the different architectural forms of the capitals worked together on the columns of the first Goetheanum. For these forms had within them the same qualities as within the stages of planetary evolution and also as the spiritual tasks of the folk-souls in human evolution. The building of the anthroposophical society, whose foundation was laid during the christmas foundation meeting, is at the same time the invisible building of the spiritual Goetheanum following the burning down of the first physical Goetheanum. The second Goetheanum should be merely the symbol for the spiritual Goetheanum which lives in the whole world. In his closing words at the christmas meeting, January 1st, Rudolf Steiner said:

"My dear friends, just as yesterday a year ago we looked upon the tongues of flame which devoured the old Goetheanum and yet did not allow our work to be interrupted even while the flames were blazing outside, so may we be justified today in hoping that when the physical Goetheanum stands before us, we will have worked so hard that it will be merely the outer symbol for our spiritual Goetheanum which we will take with us as an idea, out into the world.

Here we have laid the foundation stone. The building shall be erected upon this foundation stone, whose single stones will be the work done out in the world, by the individuals in all our groups. Let us look upon this work now and become aware of the responsibility which was spoken of today, with regard to the man of the present day who stands before the Guardian of the threshold and whose entrance into the spiritual world, must be denied.

It can certainly never occur to us, to feel anything other than the deepest pain and sadness, regarding that which happened to us a year ago. But may we also remember that everything which has achieved a certain greatness in the world, has been born out of pain. And so, may our pain be so transformed through your work, my dear friends, that a strong and light-filled society can arise."

The artistic qualities of the first Goetheanum live on as a spiritual reality in all their fullness, within the spiritual Goetheanum and in the form of the general anthroposophical society; in so far as the impulse of the christmas foundation meeting lives on in all the building stones, in all the work throughout the world.

Let us consider three specially significant qualities. On entering the Goetheanum from the west and passing eastwards through the great hall, one experienced the seven stages in the path of development of the will. It is a continuous process of change and renewal, a metamorphosis of soul qualities. The moment we come to standstill, we place ourselves outside the spiritual Goetheanum. All work within anthroposophy can be tested over against this quality. Does a spiritual development take place each day, or do we simply perpetuate and repeat the old outer forms? With regard to this quality of development on the path of the will, does our work constitute a true building stone belonging the foundation stone?

From this "will path", we are drawn to look upwards with the towering columns, out of a feeling of deep devotion to these spiritual powers without whose help we could do nothing. The 'upward striving quality' of the columns may also be taken as a "resting stone" for our building work. Is the warmth with which we gaze up to where our I unites with higher worlds truly living? Or are what we believe to be building stones somewhat limp?

And the third quality: The upward striving nature finds its fulfillment in the content-rich and colour-filled pictures in the two domes. Here is a whole cosmos of forms filled with meaning, where every picture reveals further and deeper realities of the world. It reaches fulfillment, it speaks, it holds great wisdom and yet is not exclusive. Here lies the mystery of our thinking qualities. Our thoughts should be meaningful, clear and collected yet remain open and lead to an ever deeper understanding of world realities. Does our thinking activity, our trains of thought, approach this quality expressed in the domes of the first Goetheanum, in our anthroposophical work? Are our aims of thought within anthroposophical work groups true buildingstones for the spiritual Goetheanum?

The more we steep ourselves in the artistic qualities of the first Goetheanum and in the actively working forces of the foundation stone meditation, so much the more may fiery enthusiasm for anthroposophical work be kindled. A crushing sense of shame also belongs to the test.

How does the work of the "Section for the Spiritual Strivings of Youth" relate within the spiritual Goetheanum? Each section of the High School for spiritual science has the whole spiritual Goetheanum working within it, if it works in a living way. At the same time each section must find its own definite way of working in its designated field and within the cultural activities of today. A section cannot thrive if it remains in the indefinite. It would become dilettantish both scientifically and artistically. That way of working which belongs to each section must continually be found and formed anew out of the entirety of the spiritual Goetheanum.

What is the specific area of the Youth Section? It is first of all the stage of transition after leaving school, when everything is still open and we are on the way to entering a specific field of work, but where we have not yet taken it on as our life's task. It is the wonderful yet difficult situation of making a start. The most intense goals of life can grow out of those primeval impulses to build all things, continuously anew, by building on those strong impulses coming from the spiritual worlds, from pre-earthly life, towards the spiritual Goetheanum and its spiritual foundation stone. Why should not everything continuously be restructured? This is the fundamental impulse of all genuinely vibrant youth. But only too often is this fraught with great illusions whenever strong spiritual forces exceed their limitations and are borne by over enthusiasm, such as when one is not in a position to carry through one's intentions, when one continually makes irrelevant contributions due to gaps in consciousness and when one primarily imposes demands on others. One must go beyond the foundation stone and come to the building stones themselves, – and this means work, strength and continuity of our powers of Soul. All impatience begets illusion. How can the spiritual enthusiasm of youth take effect with patience?

How may one be spiritually strong and at the same time modest?

It is not surprising that when young people learn to know anthroposophy, they feel such an immediate relationship to the christmas foundation meeting and the foundation stone meditation. For here lives the fundamental impulse of the pioneer spirit in all its purity, and this will always lie at the heart of the Section for the Spiritual Strivings of Youth. This impulse will be able to truly unfold if one has the will to go beyond the idealism of the new beginning, and to take the next step of actually working on the building. The stones which build up the spiritual Goetheanum and the Anthroposophical Society must grow from the foundation stone. Naturally enough one will come across false, inadequate and wrongly placed stones because nowadays each person carries within him so many subconsciously working, sub-earthly forces of the adversary powers. Great courage and endurance are needed in order not to follow the easy way out. The path of Truth always leads through the difficulties. The counter forces active in the sub-earthly and sub-conscious may not be avoided. They must be transformed. The "Section for the Spiritual Strivings of Youth" will gain through the resistance experienced on the path of Truth.

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