

Last remarks on the Christmas Conference

Before the evening lecture in Dornach, 5 September 1924;

GA 238, Esoteric Considerations of Karmic Connections, Volume IV; pp. 11 – 17

GA 260a, The Constitution of the General Anthroposophical Society and the School of Spiritual Science – The Reconstruction of the Goetheanum – 1924–1925; pp. 380 – 386

Translated by Philip Jacobsen by means of the translation app DeepL (www.deepl.com); *Italics* by Philip Jacobsen

There are many friends gathered here today who are here for the first time since the Christmas Conference, and it is therefore incumbent upon me, albeit in a few words, to make an introductory reference to the Christmas Conference. This *Christmas Conference* was intended to give the Anthroposophical Society a new impulse, namely the impulse that must be its own if the life that is to be incorporated into human civilisation through Anthroposophy is really to flow through it in a worthy manner. *An esoteric impulse has certainly entered the Anthroposophical Society* since this Christmas Conference. Until now, the Anthroposophical Society was, so to speak, the administrative centre for anthroposophy. From its beginnings, anthroposophy has been the vehicle through which the spiritual life that is accessible to humanity today and has been since the last third of the 19th century flows. However, this anthroposophical movement must be understood in such a way that what takes place here on earth is actually only the outward manifestation of something that is taking place in the spiritual world for the development of humanity. And anyone who wants to be a worthy adherent of the anthroposophical movement must also familiarise himself with the fact that the spiritual impulses apply to the field of the Anthroposophical Society itself.

What is the significance, my dear friends, if the human being in general believes theoretically in a spiritual world? To believe theoretically in a spiritual world means to take this spiritual world into one's thoughts. But the thoughts of people today are themselves such, even if by their very nature they represent the most spiritual for people today, that they are initially, as they have developed as the inner spirit of the human being in the course of the last four to five centuries, only suitable for absorbing *truths about the material*. And so humanity today has a spiritual life in thought, but as a general civilised humanity it only fills this spiritual life of thought with material content. What is known theoretically about anthroposophy also remains material content until the real inner, conscious power of conviction is added: that *the spiritual is a concrete reality*, that wherever matter lives for the outer human sense, spirit not only permeates and flows through this matter, but that ultimately everything material disappears before the true human gaze when it is able to penetrate through the material to the spiritual.

But then such a view must also be extended to all that which concerns us first of all. We ourselves are concerned with our *affiliation with the Anthroposophical Society*. For this fact existing in the outer world of senses, for this our affiliation with the Anthroposophical Society, we must be able to recognise the corresponding spiritual, the spiritual movement that has developed in the spiritual world in recent times and will continue to exist in earthly life if people can remain faithful to it. Otherwise it will continue to exist apart from earthly life. It will continue to exist in connection with earthly life if people find the strength in their hearts to remain faithful to it.

But that it is not only our theoretical conviction that behind minerals, plants, animals and the human being himself hovers a spiritual being, but also that behind the Anthroposophical Society, which outwardly belongs to Maja, to illusion, hovers the *spiritual archetype of the anthroposophical movement*, that is what must penetrate the heart of every person who professes anthroposophy as a deep power of conviction. And this must become real in the work and endeavours of the Anthroposophical Society. I have often said, my dear friends, before the Christmas Conference, that a distinction must be made between the anthroposophical movement, of which the same must always be said as today, and the Anthroposophical Society, which was an external exoteric administrative centre for anthroposophical esotericism. Since Christmas the opposite has been the case. At Christmas time the difficult decision arose as to whether I myself should become *chairman of the Anthroposophical Society*. In all the previous years of the Anthroposophical Society's existence, I regarded myself as the teacher of the anthroposophical cause, unconnected with the administration, and I have rigorously carried this out in the most diverse matters under consideration. The Anthroposophical Society as such was led by others. It was my responsibility to promote the anthroposophical cause within the Anthroposophical Society, insofar as individuals or their groups wished to do so.

In the course of these lectures or otherwise, our friends will have the opportunity to learn to recognise what it means to work out in an active way on the earth plane that which wants to reveal itself today in the spiritual world. And the difficulties should be recognised which are connected with it, if an *outer administration* is to be added to this relationship with the spiritual world, so to speak. And the eventuality was certainly present around Christmas time: Either those spiritual powers that give us anthroposophy will take offence at the fact that the external administration is now being drawn into esotericism itself, or something else will happen. That is why the decision was the most difficult imaginable to take at that time. For it was quite possible that the streams of spiritual life that flowed to us could have been jeopardised by such a decision.

Nevertheless, the decision had to be made because the preconditions were such that the opposite of what I have just described would have to happen if the anthroposophical cause was to remain connected with the Anthroposophical Society. In future, the Anthroposophical Society itself had to be the place through which *esoteric life* flowed directly, and which itself had an esoteric effect and became aware of its esoteric activity.

For this purpose the *esoteric board* had to be created at the Goetheanum. To this end it had to be recognised that an *esoteric task* was incumbent upon this Board in its entirety and that in the future all that flows through the Anthroposophical Society is not only anthroposophical substance to be absorbed, but that for the future, in addition to anthroposophy being taught, anthroposophy will be *done*, that is, anthroposophy will work in all external measures.

This requires the recognition of those real forces which must unite the individual personalities united in society. These forces cannot be forces that stand under some programme or set of abstract propositions. Only that which exists as *real human relationships* can establish and maintain the Anthroposophical Society in the esoteric sense. Thus in the future everything must be based on real human relationships in the broadest sense, on the concrete, not the abstract spiritual life.

One must only be able to grasp this *concrete spiritual life* as such and to see it in the smallest details of life. I would like to mention a very small detail. When this impulse was taken up, we decided to give each of our members a *new membership certificate*. As the Anthroposophical Society has now grown to twelve thousand members, it was now a question of issuing these

twelve thousand membership certificates, and I had to take the decision – as I said, it's a tiny thing – to sign each individual membership certificate myself, despite the objections that many have made. This is, of course, a labour of many weeks. But what does it mean? Not some stubbornness, not some external administrative measure, but it means that my eyes have rested on the name of the person who receives the membership certificate. It is a *human relationship*, albeit a very small one at first, but it is a human relationship.

This is how human relationships, which are facts, differ from what are mere administrative measures, what are merely written in programmes and paragraphs. Nothing of what really flows through anthroposophy may be written in statutes and paragraphs, but everything must be *real life*. Only real life can absorb esotericism.

Thus it must be said that since the Christmas Conference *the anthroposophical cause and the Anthroposophical Society can no longer be distinguished*, they have become one. That this is in the consciousness of each individual member is what it is all about.

It might seem to you, my dear friends, that this is a matter of course. Think about it, and you will find that the *completely heartfelt realisation* of this is not a matter of course, but that it is even quite difficult to carry out the matter in every moment of one's life.

Now it is a question, I would say, of being under the real concern at first: Will spiritual life continue to flow through the Anthroposophical Society under these conditions, as it has flowed through the anthroposophical movement?

But this may be said after we have now spent many months under the effects of the Christmas Conference, endeavouring to remain faithful to what we meant at that time with the *laying of the spiritual foundation stone of the Anthroposophical Society*, we may say to ourselves: that which has flowed for years continues to flow in greater abundance. And we can also say that hearts have opened up even more everywhere where *the more esoteric streak* that has flowed through all anthroposophical work since the Christmas Conference, where this more esoteric streak is just present.

Take the whole meaning of this word into your heart, my dear friends, as I have to speak it from the experiences of the last few months! Such an understanding will contribute in many ways in the future to laying the *right ground for the spiritual foundation stone* that we laid for the Anthroposophical Society at the time of the Christmas Conference.

And this brings me to what this introductory lecture is intended to point out today as an orientation to what I will have to say to you in the next few days, to point out how *the anthroposophical movement is now, at this serious moment, basically returning to its germ*. When the Anthroposophical Society was founded in Berlin at the beginning of the century out of the bosom of the Theosophical Society, something very peculiar took place. During the founding of the Anthroposophical Society, i.e. the German section of the Theosophical Society, I gave lectures on "Anthroposophy" in Berlin. This imprinted on my work from the outset the impulse that later characterised the anthroposophical movement.

But there is something else I would like to remind you of today. The first thing I announced to a very small circle at that time was entitled "Practical Karma Exercises" for a few lectures. I felt the most vivid resistance to the realisation of this project at that time. And perhaps the very oldest member of the Anthroposophical Society, who to our great joy is here again today – Mr Günther Wagner, whom I would like to welcome most warmly here as a kind of senior member of the Anthroposophical Society – will remember how strong the resistance was at that time to much of what was to be incorporated by me into the anthroposophical movement from the

very beginning. These lectures did not materialise. It did not come to cultivating that esotericism in the face of the currents that were otherwise present in the theosophical movement, that *esotericism that speaks in a completely unconcealed and unbiased way in truth of what was actually always there in theory*.

Since the Christmas Conference, here in this hall, in the various places where I have had the honour of speaking, the *concrete working of human karma* in historical phenomena, in individual human beings, has been spoken of in a quite unconcealed manner. And today a number of our anthroposophists are already informed about how the various earth lives of important personalities have unfolded, how the karma of the Anthroposophical Society itself and that of individual personalities connected with it has developed. Since the Christmas Conference these things have been discussed in a very esoteric way. Since the Christmas Conference, our cycles have been open to the public, to anyone who is interested. So we have become a *more esoteric and at the same time completely public society*.

In a certain sense, this brings us back to where we started. The intention then was what is now to become a reality. As many of our friends are here for the first time since the Christmas Conference, I will be dealing with the *question of karma* before you here in the next few days. I will only allow myself to give a kind of introduction today by talking about those things that are also hinted at, albeit sketchily, in this week's "Messages".