

## 100 years on - Whither the Anthroposophical Society?

Ann Arbor, MI / 29 June – 2 July, 2023

Kim Chotzen

*Anthroposophy Worldwide* No. 10/23, p.7.

"Welcome to the space of the Anthroposophical Society, before all the arguments began. We are meeting as concerned members with pink cards, supported by the Economics Group of the Anthroposophical Society in America<sup>27</sup> in link with the Great Lakes Branch at the Rudolf Steiner House, Ann Arbor, headquarters of the Anthroposophical Society in America. We are starting in this meta-event<sup>28</sup> with Rudolf Steiner who is bringing a gift – an

endowment with a specific intent – from the spiritual world to the earth, before all the problems began. We are on our way to becoming worthy of such an endowment. Now is not the time to question the effectiveness of it, so much as of ourselves. We daren't disappoint Michael, the one spiritual ruler steadfast in his faith in us."

Such captures the mood of the opening gesture of the meeting. Marking the centennial period during which Rudolf Steiner founded many country societies leading up to the Christmas Conference, fifteen participants stepped into a space in which, with Rudolf Steiner, as it were, we weighed his concern that humanity was at risk of losing sight of the Mystery of Golgotha, so that something, or some deed had to be done to rescue humanity's situation. He showed the *generally* human way forward in social life. Such was the Deed of Rudolf Steiner at the Christmas Conference 1923/24.

That confusion and conflict continue to unfold since then is separate to the fact that this Deed occurred for the whole of humanity. His establishing of the Anthroposophical Society, as the body on earth of the School of Spiritual Science and its Sections, needs fresh affirmation and new life breathed into it so that the Good Spirit of the Goetheanum can work in the world on behalf of humanity.

With this in mind, the event focused on finance as a general tool for expression of the spirit in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and specifically how this might look, in keeping with the Statutes and the three financial calls that sounded during the proceedings of the Christmas Conference.

As Eddie Lederman (Director of Finance, Anthroposophical Society in America) remarked, "We need to tend to the wellspring (of our movement.) But finance is the real tool we have. Finance is a mirror to what has been done, a reflection of decisions made." And, indeed, as Christopher Houghton Budd shared with us, this would seem to be the spirit in which, for some years now, the Treasurers of various Country Groups have been working, as one can see from the nine Treasurers Guidelines agreed and adopted by the Vorstand and all the General Secretaries (now called Country Representatives) in 2019.<sup>29</sup>

Additionally, in response to the Weleda crisis, which last year suddenly decreased the Goetheanum's revenue by 10%, an initiative amongst the Treasurers led to the creation of the Goetheanum Fund Worldwide, an association established under Swiss law to provide support for the Anthroposophical Society/Goetheanum in all parts of the world. Its founding membership consists of fifteen Country Groups or Societies who chose to join and work with the Fund. (See side image for an example.)

As a result of two accounting exercises we did concerning the funding of the event, a further step to 'breathing life into the body of the Anthroposophical Society' was taken. Participants shared their budgeted and possible amounts for food costs for attending the event. We all came with cash expecting to pay our share of the mutually-prepared food. Some said they could pay more, some less. In the end, there was a large enough surplus out of which the venue cost was also covered. Even then, there was enough to place on reserve with the Anthroposophical Society in America for future events.

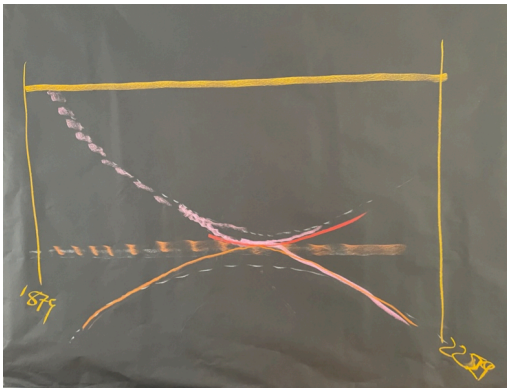
A similar exercise was done with travel costs, each according to personal circumstances, comparing what had and what could have been spent on travel to the event. Though we did not cash out in this case, it was clear that a surplus would have been generated relative to the actual cost incurred by the whole. Indeed, this experience led us to think this might be the way to fund future events, using an account in the Society's bookkeeping (i.e. not using the Society's money) as a flow-through for the funds involved.

<sup>27</sup> A recognized working field group to further economics based on Rudolf Steiner's 1922 Economics Course.

<sup>28</sup> Meta – behind or beyond; transcending.

<sup>29</sup> See *Anthroposophy Worldwide* 11-12/2021, pp. 4-5.

([https://static.goetheanum.co/assets/archiv/Weltweit/AWE/AWE2021\\_11.pdf](https://static.goetheanum.co/assets/archiv/Weltweit/AWE/AWE2021_11.pdf))



## For the Well-being of our beloved Anthroposophical Society

Thoughts and impressions following an anthroposophical event recently held in Ann Arbor

Marguerite Doray, Montréal, Canada (with editorial help by CHB)

September 2023

From June 29 to July 2, 2023, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, at the headquarters of the Anthroposophical Society of America (ASA), an initiative supported by the ASA's Economics Group came to life, hosted by members of Ann Arbor's Great Lakes Branch. The meeting was open to members of the

Anthroposophical Society from any country, who wished to examine the evolution of Rudolf Steiner's intentions in refounding the Anthroposophical Society at the 1923 Christmas Conference.

There were two of us from Canada and Christopher Houghton Budd from England was the main speaker and facilitator of the ensuing exchanges. This report is not intended as an exhaustive summary of the four-day meeting, but rather a sharing of some of the powerful images that were developed and which still live intensely within me as one of the participants.

By way of introduction, I'd like to quote Rudolf Steiner from his opening lecture at the Christmas Conference on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1923: '*Countless seeds for the future can begin to unfold their ripeness through this warmth which can surround us here, so that one day they may stand before the world as fully matured fruits as a result of what we want to do for them.*'

These few words capture the essence of the communications and exchanges that took place at the meeting. In essence, the spiritual world sends humanity endowments, gifts with a precise intention, which in this case would be supporting universal evolution, embracing humanity and the cosmos.

Rudolf Steiner received such an endowment from the spiritual world. He welcomed it into his soul and took responsibility for it by developing Anthroposophy. Human beings continue to be blessed by these endowments from the spiritual world and, thus inspired, take the necessary steps in each of their professions. But these impulses need fertile ground to become earthly reality, by being taken up by those who work, as 'representants',<sup>30</sup> with Anthroposophy in the School of Spiritual Science and carried by the collaboration of the Anthroposophical Society. If not, it can be that a similar impulse by other researchers will occur but linked to the stream of human evolution in a materialist way.

A striking example is that of *Bidor*, the anthroposophical remedy that, using Rudolf Steiner's indications, was developed as a treatment for headaches and migraines. This had the potential of generating substantial revenues for spiritual scientific research. And yet, at the same time, Aspirin was discovered and developed with the necessary finances resources, and so went on to become widely distributed and perennially lucrative.

This earthly home is the responsibility of the Sections of the School of Spiritual Science as far as research is concerned, and the responsibility of the Anthroposophical Society for securing the necessary funds for its realization *in the world and for the whole world*, as stated in statute #9 introduced at the same opening lecture at the Christmas Conference on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1924:

*'The purpose of the Anthroposophical Society will be the furtherance of spiritual research; that of the School of Spiritual Science will be this research itself...'*

We know how Rudolf Steiner weighed his every word: *The purpose of the Anthroposophical Society will be the furtherance of spiritual research*, i.e. the Anthroposophical Society must ensure that the results of Section research can be taken out into the world. *...that of the School of Spiritual Science will be this research itself...* As if the School of Spiritual Science were the receptacle of these impulses from the spiritual world, and that the task of the Sections was that through them *'the countless seeds may stand before the world as fully matured fruits...* not in an elitist or sectarian way, but as extensions and new leases of life in life's many fields of endeavour – in medicine, pedagogy, agriculture, economics, philosophy, science or the arts.

And he added: *...as a result of what we want to do for them.*

<sup>30</sup> Rudolf Steiner's word for describing the sole condition of becoming a member of the School of Spiritual Science.

The health of the Anthroposophical Society depends on whether or not we are able to assume our responsibility, as ordinary members, to support the work of the School of Spiritual Science or, as spiritual investigators, to *bring to maturity the fruits* of Anthroposophy by working harmoniously in concert with the spiritual world which continually stands ready to endow humanity with its gifts. This is why financially in our capacity as ordinary members we need to pay our share of the operating costs of the Goetheanum, so that the world may join us when it comes to the large sums of money needed to fund spiritual scientific research, a significant proportion of which is needed to cover the income and disbursements of those who do the research.

So how can we help? Everyone can find what resonates within him- or herself as regards possible means. One can, of course, contribute financially through an endowment or donation of one's own, mentioning an intention to subsidise either a sphere of activity of humanity, a particular Section, or the work of the Sections in general, or some other relevant field.

In our respective anthroposophical initiatives we can also help by putting into practice the ripened fruits of the research of the School of Spiritual Science, which continue the development of those *countless seeds* that Rudolf Steiner left us in the form of Anthroposophy during his time on earth; then our schools, our biodynamic farms, our Anthroposophical clinics, our associative economics, our artistic, scientific and pedagogical training centres would be as flaming hearths in full sight of the world and at its service. What better way to bring Rudolf Steiner's intentions to fruition?

Over the last hundred years, have we really understood this – our – responsibility as ordinary members of the Anthroposophical Society? This question was presented as the gateway to a path of healing for the next 100 years.

One of the participants, Meg Freeling, had created an insightful document on the subject, which we were even invited to read in preparation for the event. I recommend that all members take a look at it if their time permits.<sup>31</sup>

For most of us, there was nothing particularly new about these concepts in themselves. But to experience them together with the awareness of their fundamental nature concerning the furtherance of Anthroposophy *in the world and for the world*, can give fresh oxygen to the metamorphosed flames of the first Goetheanum as they passed through the Foundation Stone laid in the hearts of members on 25 December 1923.

All the thoughts expressed, all the feelings awakened, all the gestures of collaboration so natural to each other during this meeting acted like a Bengal fire sparkler from which a thousand sparks fly. And, indeed, one of the organizers, Kim Chotzen, invited us into the garden after our last meal together for a surprise. There, she gave each of us, as a metaphor, a lit Bengal fire sparkler. Thus we made a circle to say goodbye.

I am profoundly grateful to have had this opportunity in my life.

(PS: What Marguerite omits to mention is the fine cooking that she and Jean-Marc Lugand provided us all with. – chb.)

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<sup>31</sup> [https://economics.goetheanum.org/fileadmin/economics/Towards\\_2023/MF\\_Truth\\_in\\_our\\_Finances\\_2.pdf](https://economics.goetheanum.org/fileadmin/economics/Towards_2023/MF_Truth_in_our_Finances_2.pdf)