

Revisiting the Anthroposophical Society

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I will try to articulate as clearly as I can my own understanding of things as this has evolved ever since my first in-depth (9-day) rehearsal of the Christmas Conference back in 1972; something I have done several times since. Indeed, this is how and why I came into the Society. For better or worse, it has been my guide ever since.

The School has its world centre (better than ‘base’) at the Goetheanum. It is a worldwide community of ‘representants’ in the sense of the one condition Steiner gave for becoming a member. We carry the School together with Rudolf Steiner, as members and colleagues, not pupils. We all enter the School via the First Class and the General Anthroposophical Section. Along with whatever particular topics or tasks it has (Christology, theology, etc.), the latter is a section we therefore have in common. As representants, we can also avail ourselves of the 19 lessons and other meditative material, but always on the basis of each according to his ability, each according to his need (*‘jede nach seine Bedürfniss und Bedarf’*); i.e. there is and can be no external requirement to meditate and meditation done out of duty or to serve oneself is not meditation in the anthroposophical sense.

Just as the School has no pupils, so it has – or should have – no ‘bishops’ in the manner of a group (e.g. the circle of class holders) that sits beside or above the members as a whole. By all means, let those who give the lessons confer and compare notes, but not in any special capacity. We are colleagues together, although that does not mean there is no division of labour, hierarchies of spiritual ‘seniority’ (in the sense of the famous Lehrs lecture), and so on. But the School has no leadership in an earthly organisational sense, which is why Rudolf Steiner neither appointed a successor in that regard nor provided for the possibility.

The Sections have leaders in the sense that an orchestra does, and together they lead the School on earth – raying into and out of the General Anthroposophical Section, as it were. In this inheres the leadership of the School at the Goetheanum, the more so if we could return to the status ante as originally conceived, where every Vorstand member is also a section leader (and so bring to a close the current period of the ‘Goetheanum Leadership’, which, in my view, is a conflict resolution construct that has outlived its validity; it should now restrict its attention to the managing of the Goetheanum *qua* institution – the building, the course given there, etc.). The Sections in different countries could presumably organise themselves as collegiums, provided that this delicate and readily misunderstood term is understood as a standing conference of peers, not as a legal entity or association.

In each country, as also at the Goetheanum, the School with its leadership is carried and hosted by the Society with its council.¹ Each of these has the challenge and task to maintain liaison both within a country and as between one country and the others, and the Goetheanum. A task and challenge that particularly falls to the General Secretary as one who attends meetings at both ‘levels’. S/he should also attend meetings of the ‘anthroposophical institutions’, through whatever way they organise themselves, but understanding by ‘anthroposophical institution’, a school or farm or business carried and conducted by *representants*, members of the School. (This would both give meaning to the term ‘anthroposophical institutions’ and end the growing problems consequent on Waldorf schools, ‘anthroposophical’ banks and bio-dynamic farms, etc. not being run by anthroposophists.)

The central or fundamental role of the General Anthroposophical Section also presents a conundrum. Is it at the centre of the other sections gathered round it in a circle? Is it the largest chair in the circle of sections? Does it undergird all the other sections? What, in fact, is the best or right way to conceive it? Likewise, does it ‘pull rank’ on the other sections, since one joins the School via that section not the others. And is it responsible for ‘the whole’.

¹ Per my understanding of Marc Desaulles’s contribution, Country Societies are archangelic, the world Society is archaic – there is nothing in between, neither continent nor region. Countries can and should meet to compare notes, but not to create a greater place, such as North America, Europe, Australasia, etc. And groups (in the sense of statutes 11 and 13) are angelic. As part of a Country Society, each group provides a home or warmth body for the relevant and related aspect or section of the School. But group here can also be understood to include institutions and initiatives like a school, in the sense, after Steiner’s image of the Society, that Ita Wegman’s clinic or the publications were part of the Society.

None of this stops the members of the School in their individual capacity as representants directly linked to the Goetheanum from also meeting on a country basis. Indeed, this is what I understand Paul Mackay's construct of section representatives to be about, albeit it is a bit 'stiff' and to my mind too organisational.

In short, my image is that, just as the refounded Anthroposophical Society is carried by and rooted in the Country Groups or Societies (hence, 'Anthroposophical Society in _____'), so a Country Society is carried by and rooted in its groups and branches (whether informal or formal, and whether based on location or working field).

		<i>(Archai)</i> General Society	<i>(Archangelic)</i> Country Society	<i>(Angelic)</i> Groups & Institutions.
Soul	School	Section Leaders	Collegium	Board
Body	Society	Vorstand	Council	Supporters

With the General Secretary an *ex officio* participant in each, providing liaison, it is for the Council of the Society to provide the focal point for the movement in a country.

As regards funding, the Country Society, as the country host of the School, can provide designated funds (or their equivalent), meaning a channel through which funds for the School can become available, but without the Society being directly responsible for filling those channels.² The way the Economics Conference works, for example, is that we, or specifically me as convenor, have the tasks of making clear what funds we need and going to find them, but then passing them into the Society, not creating separate foundations or opening separate bank accounts. And within it, the healthiest funding would be for each section leader to include his/her attendance at collegium meetings as part of his/her section budget. This would have the benefit of ensuring the sections did relevant work such that their leaders had to represent this relevance to other leaders and to the world.

² See Treasurers Guidelines 7 and 8.