

A DISCOURSE ON THE ANTHROPOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

I have been concerned with the issue of the Anthroposophical Society for many years, for decades in fact. The reasons for this have been different and they have changed over time. To begin with they were purely personal prompted by my reluctance, inexplicable originally even to myself, to join the AS. Then the personal element gradually disappeared from my continued and even increasing concern with this issue.

This concern found its expression, among other things, in the four pieces offered here (three of them were contributions to the *Newsletter* of the AS in GB but were never published there). They were prompted by different circumstances and were written at different times over a period of thirty one years and they express my concern in four different ways. Nevertheless these pieces present, I hope, a consistent and coherent picture of the present state and status of the Anthroposophical Society as I see it.

Two more things should be said here. One is to do with the sources I used. Often the author and the reader are not on an equal footing regarding the issues in question. The former presents the results of his long and thorough investigation and studies of various materials, documents, accounts, testimonies, correspondence, etc. which are not immediately available, even with the help of quotations, to the latter. But that is not the case here. The only source materials I used were Steiner's own words concerning his intentions and actions regarding the Anthroposophical Society which were said publicly and are well known and easily available. The fact that he also spoke on the subject elsewhere, even in private conversations, does not change anything because I do not believe he said there something fundamentally new or different to what he said in public. He wanted to make his momentous deed as transparent, as comprehensible and as accessible as possible. There were no hidden, or mysterious or 'confidential' intentions which could only be shared with and understood by a few 'initiated' individuals – it would have defeated the object.

Another source on which I based my discourse is my observations and experiences the relevant parts of which I shared with the reader. Obviously to all this I applied my thinking and whatever capacity of perception and understanding I have, but I expect the reader to do the same.

Still another source I used is not that obvious. I may call it 'anthroposophic intuition' or 'anthroposophic sense' of what is right or wrong (in anthroposophical affairs in this case). It is derived from one's general knowledge and understanding of anthroposophy and is a younger sibling of moral intuition. While the latter is supposed to guide our own actions the former can be used as a tool for understanding and analysing events and other people's thinking, intentions and actions. For example, I used it with regard to Steiner's decision to become a member and leader of the AS with which I couldn't 'agree' originally and only later was able to inwardly 'accept' it as being right. I also used it trying to understand Steiner's thinking during what was reported as his last conversation (on his deathbed) with Ita Wegman. Or thoughts, motives and actions of the Vorstand members after Steiner's death. Or their successors, Rudolf Grosse in particular, whose book *The Christmas Foundation; beginning of a new cosmic age* was disturbing reading for me. All these are just examples and none of it is part of the present discourse. Other things, where I tried to exercise my 'anthroposophic intuition', are, and the reader will easily discern them. His own 'anthroposophic intuition' will no doubt be vigorously at work.

Finally, what I offer here is not a theoretical discourse. If taken seriously, the issues raised here, whatever views one might have of them, have very serious implications – both spiritual and social, both at present and for the future. With these words I would like to conclude my preface. It is now up to the reader to have his say.

SOME PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

(Contribution of 1997)

Dear Editor,

I whole-heartedly welcome the emergence on your pages of an open and free discussion about the Anthroposophical Society. For me it has not come too soon as I have been concerned with this issue for many years and even tried to encourage such a discussion. But now when it is taking place I was not, to begin with, at all sure whether I should take part in it or whether my contribution would be welcomed or even allowed. Let me explain and give some background details.

I came to this country in 1971 from the Soviet Union where I met anthroposophy some eight years previously. My anthroposophical milieu there was limited to one person and a few books while in the West one could embrace anthroposophy in its totality – read books, meet fellow anthroposophists, exchange and implement ideas, join the AS. I had no problems with the first two, but concerning the free exchange of ideas and putting them into practice I unexpectedly encountered some obstacles not totally dissimilar to those from my Soviet experiences. As for joining the AS there also was a resistance but it came from within me and not from without.

To begin with I could not quite explain it, even to myself, but in time, as it did not go away and even became stronger, it also became more conscious and clear. At the same time my decision not to join the AS perturbed me. I had to reconcile myself with it. I also was challenged about it by other people, to say nothing of the fact that my best friends and most of the people I knew personally in this country were all members of the AS. I had to consider and reconsider this matter several times and read what Steiner had to say about it, and every time I was only confirmed and strengthened in my views.

Gradually the personal element disappeared for me in this question and made way for more objective aspects which concerned the AS per se and other anthroposophists. Of course one can never be absolutely sure whether one is right or wrong in these serious matters deeply rooted in the spirit. One can only submit one's views to the judgement of fellow anthroposophists and of the time.

But in my experience very few anthroposophists showed any interest in this issue let alone in discussing it. The nearest it came to this, were occasional laments about the insufficient growth of the membership and speculations about the reasons why people, including some anthroposophists, do not join the AS.

But even with this I could never understand why, if people were really concerned and wanted to know these reasons, they, instead of speculating about them, would not ask those for whom these reasons constitute a *raison d'être*. Therefore when three years ago Nick Thomas, the General Secretary of the AS in GB, addressed this issue in the News Sheet I wrote to him suggesting that "if the Anthroposophical Society, General or of this country, would ever decide to publicly and freely discuss its standing in the world today and the membership issue, I would be happy to contribute and give my reasons for deciding not to join the Society."

The fact that I received no reply was for me a further and authoritative confirmation that there was no intention of having such a discussion and of giving a platform to the 'outsiders' like myself. The latter was confirmed, this time very explicitly, a year later when I received a letter from Nick, on a different subject, which contained the following passage totally unconnected with anything I ever wrote or said to him and therefore more surprising and telling: "With all due respect to your good self, you must realise that you have no rights as far as the publication in the Newsletter is concerned, especially as you are not a member. No organisation I know

of acknowledges it as a *right* of non-members to have material published at the expense of the members. Even members do not have that right!"

This message raised a number of questions perhaps more relevant to the present discussion than to the subject of my correspondence with Nick, but there was one point which could not be left unanswered and which I answered as follows: "Having failed completely to understand what you meant by writing to me that non-members have no right 'to have materials published at the expense of the members', I'd like to say the following. Unlike some members of the AS in GB I do pay to the Society my modest contribution, and have been doing it for many years. I do it partly as a token of my gratitude to the Society for sending me its publications without ever asking to pay for them, and partly as my duty to meet at least some of the expenses from which I benefit."

I have to write about these things and confront the resentment regarding non-membership expressed by the above view because it not only comes as it does from the highest anthroposophical office in the land but is also shared at least by some other members of which I become aware from time to time. Over the years I have also experienced other than financially clothed forms of obstruction including the one which I cannot call any other than 'anthroposophical racism', when someone said, behind my back of course, "Why should we listen to him? He doesn't even belong to the English Folk Soul" (ironically this person, like myself, was neither English nor born in this country). Whatever objections people might raise now against my participation in the present discussion, I can only answer them by stating my justification for this participation, which, hopefully, is shared by all other participants, namely, a concern for anthroposophy.

I do not intend now, as I suggested to Nick three years ago, to expound my reasons for not joining the AS. Not because they became obsolete. On the contrary, being personal as they are, I still think them to be quite relevant for the present discussion. But I find it increasingly difficult to speak publicly from the personal perspective in spite of the fact that today everything really meaningful and important comes through personal experience and is therefore, in the first instance, personal, individual and subjective. As things are, people generally fail to raise themselves above this personal level and see in personal experiences, of other people as well as of their own, what they contain as the objective, enduring and universal. On the other hand in something, which is presented as objective, they tend to see or suspect the personal and subjective.

Anthroposophists are no exception, and it is not at all uncommon for them to regard something 'disagreeable' as idiosyncratic or as a personal attack on this or that individual. (I have no doubt that some people, but not Nick himself, will inevitably see something 'personal' in my above allusion to him. This I can answer, firstly, by saying that it is impossible while talking about specific events in life not to mention individuals through whom these events come about. Secondly, by offering the following proofs that I do not and cannot have anything 'personal' against Nick and that it is his viewpoint and not his personality that I am discussing. It was Nick who made it possible for me to receive the Society's publications without imposing any conditions. At least on one occasion my contribution to the News Sheet was published there thanks to Nick. I attended several lectures and talks given by Nick, and on each occasion he said something, which was for me the most important point concerning the subject.)

There is though one consideration concerning the membership issue, which can be discussed quite objectively. It was often put to me as the most powerful reason for joining the AS and it goes like this: The AS was Steiner's most momentous deed, and if he himself was its creator, president and also a member, how can a true anthroposophist, by refusing to become a member, reject this momentous deed? This argument stands as absolutely irrefutable if we ignore the fact that at the same

time it refutes, by placing a motive outside the individual, another momentous deed of Steiner's, his book *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

Prokofieff brought this line of argument still further, to its spiritual conclusion, by saying the following: Rudolf Steiner bears the Karma of the AS in the spiritual world. If by refusing to join the AS "we do not wish to share this with him, we can scarcely call ourselves his true pupils or servants of those spiritual forces which through him have called Anthroposophy into life." What a proposition – we cannot fulfil these highest spiritual ideals whatever we do if we do not perform a certain physical action, which is what the membership of the AS on the physical plane is! Now if the fulfilment of the spiritual aspirations which I bring with me to my earthly life is conditioned by my performing a defined physical action regardless of the prevailing physical and social conditions and of my perception of them, then my essential freedom is taken away from me even before I am conceived. I should then perhaps pray to the gods to be spared such an incarnation.

For me those who seek guidance within themselves rather than from the outside can never take their membership of the AS for granted. And if they approach it with the question 'Why?' it continues to be ever present in them even after they take a decision to become or not to become a member. Therefore the present discussion, even if it caught them unawares, provides anthroposophists with a good opportunity to assess or reassess, whichever might be the case, their views concerning the AS.

But when embarking on this process one should be quite clear about one's starting-point lest it might turn out to be a false start. The state of the Society's affairs seems to be a natural point of departure. By scrutinising them one can be, as a result, either reassured in one's views or, on the contrary, urged to change them. As someone who has been through this process, though through circumstances rather than by choice, I can share some of my most important findings. (In no way have I any intention of or interest in criticising the AS. It is a long time now since I resigned myself to the position of a melancholic observer as far as its affairs are concerned. And if I am writing about some of them now it is only because it is relevant in this context.)

I found it quite unbelievable that anthroposophists had no means of freely communicating with each other within the framework of the Society. Not only did the Society fail to provide such means, so vital for free spiritual life, but it was in full control whenever such communications tried to find their way through the Society's channels, and it could and did indeed censor and suppress them. What is more, it all was done by one person, nominated and not elected to this position, without ever those activities being publicly declared or sanctioned, without being subjected to any control or supervision, and without that person being, in real terms, accountable to anybody.

I tried to speak, among other things, about this form of Ahrimanic control of the spiritual life within the AS in GB as publicly as I possibly could. The tragic thing for me was that the virtual impossibility to discuss such vital matters within the Society was fully matched by the members' indifference and unconcern for them. Indeed those were the two sides of the same coin.

Some thirteen years later I discovered, this time together with some fellow anthroposophists, that exactly the same situation existed within the General AS. This discovery entailed a correspondence, both individual and collective, first with the then editor of the *News from the Goetheanum*, then with the Vorstand, and finally with Nick Thomas. To him I sent copies of the correspondence with the other addressees and said, among other things, the following: "I am sending you these documents not to solicit your support or prompt your reaction to the above assessments but because I thought the issues raised in them might be important to you as they are to me and to the others concerned. You might also remember that in 1982 in my little book *Life, Knowledge, Anthroposophy* I spoke of the similar issue, namely, the editorship of the

News Sheet of the AS in GB. You might be interested to know that the only tangible result of my venture was a ban of my book (as some sort of 'anthroposophical pornography') at the bookshops both at Rudolf Steiner House in London and in Dornach. I thought this time you might decide to exercise your responsibility as General Secretary of a national Anthroposophical Society and go public with regard to these vital issues, as we requested the Vorstand to do."

Will people be surprised to learn that our addressees did not go either public or private? From the Vorstand, to begin with, came a rather evasive reply but when we asked them to please give specific answers to specific questions about their policy, responsibility and accountability regarding the *News from the Goetheanum* they fell silent. Nick in his reply to me ignored my appeal to him altogether but made instead a surprising statement which I quoted earlier and which contained two extraordinary revelations.

One was his reference to other organisations 'he knows of' as a criterion for the AS. For one who is even remotely acquainted with the origin and nature of the AS it immediately poses a question, "What are the spiritual foundations of the current AS? Has it got any?" But in factual terms we have to acknowledge that in some ways the AS did succeed in modelling itself on other organisations 'we know of', though in some other ways it is still lagging behind. For instance in the question of openness and accountability.

It is inconceivable for the great majority of modern organisations to grant some of its members an undeclared and uncontrollable power over the others and for their leaders to feel free not to reply to their own members and members of the public concerning the workings of their organisations. Many organisations nowadays have even charters and codes of practice to make their functioning and lines of responsibility and accountability transparently clear.

Whether the leaders of the AS ever decide to emulate these and other common practices, in letter or spirit, they, unlike leaders of other organisations 'we know of', have also a very special obligation. If they purport or imply to be presiding over the same organisation founded by Rudolf Steiner they have to present, like he did, their spiritual credentials and explain, loudly and clearly, in what capacity they occupy his chair. Unlike chairs and chairmanships, the spirit is not subject to inheritance or succession.

When Rudolf Steiner appeared on the public arena with a spiritual message one of the first things he did was to present his spiritual credentials. But he did not introduce himself in terms of his past incarnations or his world mission because, if anything, it was absolutely irrelevant in the context of his public activity. He simply stated the facts about himself in terms of what he was doing and how he was doing it, for everyone to see and judge him on this basis. The book *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds* was and still is his spiritual credentials. (In a wider context, which goes beyond the AS and the School of Spiritual Science, *The Philosophy of Freedom* should really be regarded as Steiner's spiritual credentials while *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds* may be called his esoteric credentials.) All Steiner's subsequent deeds including the foundation of the AS were consistent with his spiritual identity. The spiritual identity of the present leadership of the General AS remains today undefined.

The other of Nick's revelations concerns members' right, or rather a lack of it, to publish their communications in their own Newsletter, i.e. the very right to communicate freely with each other. That they did not have this right de facto I had known all along. Nick only confirmed to me that they did not have it de jure either. But who has taken this inalienable right away from them, who is in charge of it? If you have an answer to this question, dear members, then you know who really runs your Society.

Now being as critical of the AS as I am, I do not think that the state of its affairs, however unsatisfactory these might be, should constitute a starting point for the assessment of its more fundamental aspects. Critical assessments are very useful for seeing the reality as it is and for identifying harmful symptoms or diseases. But they cannot necessarily form a foundation for building the future. Something else is needed for this.

Nor would I advocate an 'historical' approach when the studies of how the AS has been developing and changing over years would be used as guidance for a fundamental assessment. Such studies could certainly be invaluable for learning from past mistakes, and in terms of 'Know thyself!' they are indispensable. But here again what happened or was done in the past does not necessarily indicate a right direction towards the future.

But what seems to be the most appropriate and right, in fact the only possible approach to the matter is to go back to the very foundation of the AS, to its founder and his ideas, intentions and actions regarding his creation. Surely they should give us clear indications and a reliable guidance for whatever assessment we wish to undertake.

In fact it is exactly the approach which has been exercised lately by some people and which prompted the current discussion. This approach has also resulted in two opposite views. According to the one the AS is and always has been based precisely on Steiner's indications, while the other asserts that these indications were abandoned and the AS was consequently placed on a wrong foundation, therefore it should now be returned to its original and true basis. It is not that it resulted in these apparently irreconcilable views that makes this approach wrong – any approach might divide people. What makes it wrong in my opinion is that it is firmly based in the past.

Of course it is very important to know the exact facts pertaining to the foundation of the AS and whether there were any deviations from Steiner's ideas, intentions and indications. But surely we should allow at the same time, at least hypothetically, a possibility that today Steiner might have had *different* ideas and intentions, might have given *different* indications and might have performed *different* actions. We can stretch our imagination still further and visualise Steiner addressing us from his abode with the words like these: "Whatever my ideas and intentions regarding the AS were so many years ago, what are, dear friends, *your* ideas and intentions in the reality and conditions in which you live *now*?"

Because if we can hear this admonition within ourselves or can imagine it coming from our Teacher then we can know that what is important is not what we know theoretically but what we experience, and not what we believe to be right or wrong but what we experience as right or wrong. We shall also then know what our starting-point should be. It is our perception and understanding of the reality in which we live, of the world and our time, and also of the world's and our own needs and aspirations. Then out of this our own ideas and intentions as well as concrete actions and practical arrangements concerning our anthroposophical life can be born. It is only after we have created something out of ourselves, be it an idea, a picture, or a physical entity, will it be appropriate and perhaps prudent to turn to Steiner and subject our creation to the test of his thoughts and deeds. Can we be brave enough to trust anthroposophy in ourselves in the matters as serious as those we are discussing now?

At this point I would like to offer what constitutes the essence of my contribution to the present discussion. It is a piece written some fifteen years ago in response to the questions suggested by Hedley Gange. These materials were printed in the periodical *Forum for the Anthroposophical Community*, which I initiated, edited and published at the time. Though the subject in question can never be dealt with exhaustively by one person and in a short article and though written so many years

ago, I think neither Hedley Gange's questions nor my attempts to answer them have lost any of their relevance.

THE ANTHROPOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AND THE SPIRIT-BEING
ANTHROPOSOPHIA

(From the *Forum for the Anthroposophical Community*, No.6, January 1983)

Hedley Gange

Dear Editor,

I have read with much interest your book *Life, Knowledge, Anthroposophy*. Would it be possible for you to apply your basic approach to some of the questions that are of particular concern in Britain at the present time? Your readers would, I am sure, be interested in your views on, for example, the following questions:

1. Can anthroposophy exist without being organised? Is it essential, or of primary importance, that anthroposophy should be organised?
2. If you feel that free, universal, i.e. non-organised, anthroposophy is a possibility (though not necessarily the only possibility), could you indicate briefly your ideas on the subject?

Perhaps you could consider commenting in the next issue of *Forum*?

Ilya Zilberberg

In response to Hedley Gange's questions I would first of all like to thank him, on behalf of all concerned, for raising such important questions, which however are hardly ever publicly discussed. Now if we see anthroposophy as being an earthly manifestation of the spirit-being Anthroposophia, on the one hand, and represented on earth by the Anthroposophical Society, on the other, we can paraphrase these question, in their true spiritual/physical context, in the following way:

1. Does Anthroposophia need the Anthroposophical Society for her earthly mission?
2. Can this mission be fulfilled without the Anthroposophical Society?

It can be easily anticipated that even the posing of these questions by an ordinary mortal, let alone the answering of them, may be regarded by many as arrogant and irresponsible, especially as Rudolf Steiner has already answered them by his momentous deeds.

To this I can say that what Rudolf Steiner did at Christmas 1923 was his answer to particular spiritual/physical/social conditions at the time, which are markedly different today. To say that what was done sixty years ago should hold sway today only because it was done by a certain personality, however great and venerable, is to strike anthroposophy at its very heart. Besides what we have today as the Anthroposophical Society is not the answer Rudolf Steiner gave in 1923/4.

As for the questions themselves it is not someone's whim but life itself, which poses them. Being faced with them we cannot shun or brush them aside or wait for Rudolf Steiner's next incarnation to answer them. He has done more than enough by opening for us the source out of which such questions could be answered – by nobody else but ourselves. And it is my strong belief that through our individual struggles with such questions and through help we derive from the struggles of others we can better understand the demands of our time and meet them.

Regarding my own attempt to answer the above questions it can by necessity produce only a limited and sketchy answer, both in terms of scope and depth. Much more can be said on the matter, and differently as well. It is hoped that what follows will stimulate just that.

Let us be clear first however about what the earthly mission of Anthroposophia is. As we can understand from Rudolf Steiner and experience within our own souls this mission, or aspiration, of Anthroposophia is threefold:

- To open herself to mankind
- To enter human souls and transform them
- To live in all human deeds and earthly affairs.

This mission could not have been fulfilled had it been one-sided. In fact this trinity of spiritual aspirations streaming down to earth is met by the upward streaming trinity of human longings, albeit mainly unconscious at present:

- To meet the spirit-being Anthroposophia
- To be united with her
- To arrange life on earth out of this unity.

Rudolf Steiner is the first human being in whom this meeting has taken place in its totality. What is more, it is through him that Anthroposophia has fulfilled the first part of her mission, and it is he who laid the foundation for the other two, and for mankind to meet this being at all three levels.

This mission-cum-meeting is, by its very nature, both individual and social, occult and public, esoteric and exoteric. For its fulfilment it needs a form of exactly the same nature. At the initial stage however neither such a form, nor conditions for its creation were available. And Rudolf Steiner had to use what we may call an 'interim' – between the old and the new – form. What was meant for all mankind he had to give initially but to a tiny part of it, i.e. to a small group of people formed as a society, and the society was neither fully esoteric nor fully public. To be true to the nature of Anthroposophia and her mission Rudolf Steiner had to stay with his anthroposophy outside this group.

After the fire of the first Goetheanum, which highlighted all that was unsatisfactory in the interim arrangement there were three possibilities for the future which Rudolf Steiner apparently considered:

1. To continue with the existing arrangement.
2. To sever all relations with the group (i.e. with the Anthroposophical Society) and find a different form for the anthroposophical mission.
3. To unite himself and anthroposophy with the Anthroposophical Society transforming it into a true meeting place of Anthroposophia and mankind in accordance with the spirit of the time.

In the event Rudolf Steiner chose the third course of action. Not because the conditions were ripe this time – they are never fully ripe for truly free deeds. They have to be anticipated, in fact *created*, by deeds born out of moral imagination. Therefore Rudolf Steiner was at pains to emphasise again and again that what he had done was just *planting a seed* for something to grow out of it in the future.

This something is a living threefold organism-organisation. Anthroposophia would enter it through its Head – the School of Spiritual Science where she would take on a form of anthroposophy. Anthroposophy would then be received by the Heart – the membership where a new consciousness would be born. Out of this

consciousness impulses would stream into the Limbs – the Anthroposophical Movement rooted with its deeds in all spheres of life.

Every organ of such an organism is essential. Without its Head it would grow into a political party, without its Heart – into a theocracy, without its Limbs – into a sect.

So what is the Anthroposophical Society today? What has grown out of the seed planted by Rudolf Steiner? What are the trends of the current development?

It is a remarkable and characteristic feature of the anthroposophical consciousness which reigns today that it lives in and of the past in that its main interest, in respect to the above questions, is concentrated on what was planted sixty years ago rather than on what has grown and is growing out of it now. But the present demands our answers to its pressing questions.

One, central to our subject, and which has to be answered in no general, secretive or ambiguous way, is whether the Anthroposophical Society is really esoteric and has a direct contact, through its School of Spiritual Science, with the spiritual world, as was the case at the time when Rudolf Steiner was its president. Whether the answer comes, as it should do, directly and publicly from the School itself, it definitely and clearly comes in another way, i.e. through what lives within the Anthroposophical Society and comes from it to the world.

In this respect one of the major developments has been the emergence, alongside free, universal and living Science of Spirit, of something altogether different – established, dogmatic and dead – 'anthroposophical ideology'. It is this ideology, devoid of true spirit, which is comfortable in the past and is at a loss when faced with current issues and problems. Or comes up with solutions which can hardly be inspired by the Spirit of the Time.

I have spoken about it more specifically in the book *Life, Knowledge, Anthroposophy* mentioned by Hedley Gange. Here, by way of an illustration, I may refer to the recent changes in the AS in GB. These are clearly the result of passive, dead thinking reflecting on what presents itself to the sense organs rather than of active, living thinking in accord with the spirit behind the physical phenomenon. Coupled with this thinking is the picture offered as an illustration of the new structure and depicting the Executive Council, the Assembly and the membership respectively as Head, Heart and Limbs. Apart from being a rather mechanical imitation of the living reality and arbitrary adaptation of the well-known image, this picture portrays, if anything, a typical party and power-orientated structure.

I think the emergence of 'anthroposophical ideology' with all its consequences has been inevitable, given the conditions in which anthroposophy, the individual and society as a whole find themselves in our time. I also think that more daunting developments are awaiting us, and an attempt will be made by adversary forces not just to suppress, attack or kill anthroposophy but to take it over and take charge of it.

There is no better place and means for achieving it than within and through an organisation. It is one of the demands of our time that people today should come and work together in an organised way. Therefore it is in organisations that adversary forces are most active making the individual and his freedom an object of their most vicious attacks.

Only true inner freedom can unite people, and it is something, which has been almost totally eliminated from modern organisations. It is virtually impossible for an 'organised' individual to develop his moral imagination and work out of it. On the other hand, he finds it quite natural and advantageous to relegate his initiative and responsibility to authority or the 'collective' and submit to the established way of thinking and acting.

The Anthroposophical Society being, as it is, a very special type of organisation, is bound to be attacked more severely. And it is much more vulnerable to these attacks unless and until it has developed into the above threefold organism

firmly rooted in the spirit. Otherwise it does not protect anthroposophy from adversary forces but exposes it to them.

What is more, if the Society with its School does not have its own direct connection with the spiritual world apart from Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy which after Christmas 1923 became everyone's connection with the world of spirit, then the Anthroposophical Society, whatever its origin, is in no different position with regard to representing anthroposophy, speaking in its name and being responsible for it than any other organisation, group, or individual who might decide to do so. It is no situation of mere inconsistency but one fraught with consequences the full extent of which it is even difficult to envisage today.

To avoid the danger, the existing external arrangements regarding anthroposophy should be brought in line with the existing spiritual reality. It means, in my opinion, that in the present conditions anthroposophy should be left free from any organisation or authority to stand in the world without any attachments and face it in its pure form. It is best not only for anthroposophy but also for an individual seeking the world of spirit.

At Christmas 1923 the foundation was laid which enables every individual to meet and unite with the Anthroposophia in the threefold way. The Anthroposophical Society was envisaged as the best place for such a meeting. Today, however, no meeting place can be found on the physical plane save anthroposophy itself. And the individual, without being either protected or inhibited by the present membership of the Society or by the past Foundation of it, should by his own efforts and strivings, out of his own inner being find his own way to anthroposophy-Anthroposophia and establish his own relations with her.

If these individual strivings and relations are true and healthy then, out of them and according to the prevailing conditions, individuals will find appropriate forms for coming and working together out of anthroposophy for the good of all mankind. Then, and only then, shall we have organisations, which are both organic in their nature and consistent with the Spirit of our time.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS WORLD OF OURS?

(Contribution of 2014)

Perhaps it is presumptuous to, publicly, try and give an answer to this question – everyone can easily compile a long list of the ills that plague the world today. An attempt to explain the reasons for these ills to anthroposophists might be regarded as an insult to their intelligence – every anthroposophist can refer you to numerous explanations, warnings and predictions given by Steiner himself. Going further and offering a remedy for these ills would be simply beyond the pale.

Yet I am prepared to take all three steps without the fear of replicating or insulting anybody. What I have to say is not borrowed from the domain of common knowledge, but is based on personal experience and observations. I think this makes my endeavour legitimate. In it I was helped by the fact that I happened to have lived in two completely different cultures and societies (one being the former Soviet Union and the other the United Kingdom) which allowed me, apart from a wider perspective, the possibility of seeing how evolutionary and counter-evolutionary forces work within different nations and in different circumstances to achieve their objectives.

In the first few years of living in England in the early 1970s I marvelled at what had been achieved by this nation, through its highly developed consciousness soul, in various walks of life, from private and personal to public and social. But the two processes that were running in parallel gradually changed my attitude. They did not cause any disappointment nor did they change my perception, but they added to it. One process was internal – I was getting a better understanding and some insights

into the life and people round me. The other was external – the inexorable changes that were taking place in the world and in England.

I can express my new perception like this. The consciousness attained by the present humanity, despite its achievements and vital qualities, cannot cope with what is going on in the world today. It cannot grasp its changes, the new factors of life and the ensuing problems, let alone solve them. It cannot cope even with its own aspirations.

Now one can learn about this discrepancy between the present-day consciousness and the demands of our time from reading about it, can recognise the truth of it and then even present it to others as a fact. But one can also encounter and experience its various manifestations, again and again, even before one grasps it conceptually. Then one knows it as a reality.

To illustrate this I can refer to one manifestation, which would be familiar to everyone – industrial disputes. The very fact that they are still part of our life, 250 years after the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, is a cultural and social anachronism. While their acceptable, accepted and even legalised means of solution – a labour strike, is a cultural and social failure, even a disgrace. For the strike is nothing other than violence directed, preferably, at the third party, innocent people like customers, passengers, patients, students, etc. who have nothing to do with the dispute itself but are purposely turned into its victims. Not all of them are violent, but there are many anachronisms and failures in our public life which are in fact anachronisms and failures of our consciousness and way of thinking. They are the signs of our inability to cope with the realities of life.

A wise man gave, befittingly, a simple explanation for this inability: "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them". No, it is not Rudolf Steiner, it is Albert Einstein. Thus, mankind needs new thinking, say Albert Einstein, Rudolf Steiner and, most importantly, life itself. But mankind is blissfully unaware of this and is plodding on trying to patch up the numerous holes that incessantly appear in the threadbare garment of its existence. So if this is the situation in the world at large, what about that tiny part of it which is our 'anthroposophical world'? How does it fare in this respect?

Unlike the 'ignorant' majority we are very 'clever' because we know from Rudolf Steiner everything there is to know about what is wrong with our world, why it is wrong and how to put it right. As to actually 'putting it right', whether it concerns the world at large or our tiny anthroposophical world, here, in my experience, we do no better than the rest of mankind. In the anthroposophical world I encountered and experienced the same discrepancy and inability as in the world at large. So why have we, anthroposophists, failed to develop and apply a different and urgently needed thinking advocated by Einstein and elaborated by Steiner?

It is a tricky question, not least because behind the collective '**we**' there are many individual '**I**'s. This differentiation reflects both the spiritual and social reality. There is a 'we' domain and there is an 'I' domain, and there is also an interplay between the two. While discussing them one has to be careful how one treads in these different terrains. Illustrations and examples can be very helpful, and I thought I would use here the ones which came to my mind quite spontaneously on the following occasion.

In the group where I was helping with the studies of *The Philosophy of Freedom* I was asked how one can develop what Steiner called 'intuitive thinking', 'moral imagination' and 'ethical individualism', and whether I could give a personal example as an illustration. It is a natural question for someone who does not wish to treat such vital spiritual qualities purely theoretically, but how do you answer it? These intimate qualities, which are achieved through personal endeavours and experienced inwardly, manifest themselves ultimately through their enactment. Even if one is blessed with some such achievements one is not necessarily aware of it and

in any case it would be almost impossible to speak about this publicly. But luckily I suddenly remembered a few instances of other people's actions which, in my view, reflected those qualities. I also have, in contrast with them, some examples of people acting in identical situations but clearly demonstrating a lack of those qualities. I thought I would use these different examples here. They happened to be connected with a particular fact of my biography: though I have been a student of anthroposophy for half a century now, I have never been a member of the Anthroposophical Society.

Many years ago I had an anthroposophical friend who since then crossed the threshold. He was older than me and much more knowledgeable in anthroposophy which was for him a living reality. We met both anthroposophically and socially, although not very often, and we were not bosom friends.

One day he said that he wanted us to go together to an anthroposophical meeting. I knew of this meeting which was 'for members only'. Most anthroposophical meetings have this designation though their content hardly ever warrants it. But that particular meeting was different – it was devoted to the affairs of the Anthroposophical Society. Though I am of the opinion that all anthroposophical meetings (or any meetings and gatherings for that matter) should be public unless there are specific reasons for exclusion, I also think that one has no right to attend an internal meeting of an organisation if one is not its member. So the following dialogue ensued between us:

"But this meeting is for members only." – "I know that." – "But I'm not a member." – "I know that as well." – "But how can I attend a meeting for members if I'm not a member?" – "Because I invite you." – "But I have neither right nor reason to be there!" – "You have both – I invite you because I want you to be there." – "But what if other people object?" – "It's not your problem, Ilya. It's my problem," and he repeated: "I want you to be there."

So I went to the meeting, together with my friend, experiencing some trepidation I have to admit. The fact that I knew most of the people there made it more awkward for me. I had no idea how many of them knew that I was not a member, but no objections were raised to my presence there, and I breathed a great sigh of relief when the meeting was over. My friend never spoke of the meeting again and I never asked him any questions. I still do not know, and now will never know, why he wanted me to be at that meeting. But I know one thing: his motives were purely spiritual, unconventional and his own which he was prepared to follow against all possible odds. This for me was an example of intuitive thinking and moral imagination.

Another similar example was not so dramatic. Again quite some years ago I sent a private letter to the editor of the *Anthroposophy Worldwide* in response to some contribution. Replying to me the editor asked for my permission to publish my letter knowing full well that I was not a member of the AS, and the letter was duly published. What a contrast it is with the present situation when those in charge of this periodical do not even bother to reply to my repeated requests to put me on their mailing list!

Now the contrasting examples. Unlike the above exceptional examples of the deeds out of spirit these are typical examples – and I have many similar ones – of anthroposophists acting out of conventional, dogmatic and mundane considerations.

I have already mentioned that many anthroposophical events are designated 'for members only' without rhyme or reason. One such event was a cultural lecture with slides by a prominent anthroposophist which I was not allowed to attend. When I asked him, prior to the lecture, whether it contained anything unsuitable for non-members of the AS he found the proposition ridiculous. He knew nothing of the membership stipulation, but could not allow me to attend his lecture because this *had nothing to do with him* and was the responsibility of the organisers!

Another example concerns not just a prominent anthroposophist but even the highest anthroposophical authority in the country, the former General Secretaries of the AS in GB (two people were sharing this function at that time). They had a meeting in our area for 'members of the AS' devoted to "the future of Anthroposophical work in the UK." Since both my wife and I, not being members, did such work, were concerned about its future and lived in the UK, I wrote to them asking whether they had any objection to our participation. They had and gave the most bureaucratic reason imaginable: "As this is advertised as a meeting for members, in that respect since you and your wife are not members, we feel it would not be appropriate for you to attend."

As to the publication in anthroposophic periodicals my various contributions have been rejected by both our *Newsletter* and, lately, by the *Anthroposophy Worldwide* for the reason of my non-membership. In justification of this I was challenged to find any organisation which would allow a publication by a non-member. I decided to accept the challenge and wrote to some randomly chosen organisations. I discovered as a result that the Anthroposophical Society is perhaps unique in refusing such publications, while for the rest of the world the criterion is not a membership but competence and relevance. While all other organisations are happy and even eager for the members of the public to have interest in and access to their publications, over the years various attempts have been made to stop me receiving the *Newsletter* (though I paid for the privilege!), one of which was successful but it was short-lived thanks to the present General Secretary.

These contrasting examples, as I explained, are connected with the Anthroposophical Society and its membership, but the issue itself goes far beyond this and the few individuals involved. I have no doubt that most anthroposophists would agree with those individuals and do absolutely the same in those and similar situations, whether within or without the AS. Because the thinking they use is the same, outmoded and unfree, while the new and free thinking urged by Steiner and our time is just not there. This brings us to my original question – Why?

Concerning the 'I' domain I prefer to leave this question unpursued and unanswered – it is up to each individual to deal with it. I am concerned here exclusively with the 'we' domain. Some may find it a contradiction in terms: 'we' cannot think, only 'I' can, so it is wrong to talk about the 'we' domain in this sense. But I am not talking about the development of 'collective thinking' which was practiced, for instance, in the Soviet Union, with some devastating consequences. I have in mind something completely different which is not there yet. What do we have at present in this respect?

Everyone would acknowledge the importance of free thinking, some, no doubt, try to develop or developed it, many study *The Philosophy of Freedom*, individually and in groups, there are lectures and seminars, articles and books written on the subject. But as far as the anthroposophical public life is concerned, more specifically that of the Anthroposophical Society, there prevails conventional and stereotyped thinking in it. Free thinking is not cultivated and encouraged there, and one would be hard pressed to discern its traces. To put it simply, it is not on the anthroposophical agenda.

What we need is an *anthroposophical environment* conducive and receptive to what individuals try to develop as their independent thinking. This is the 'we' domain and such an environment can only be born out of it. But it cannot emerge within the present Anthroposophical Society. Radical changes have to take place. Not just as before – **in** the AS, administrative and cosmetic, but **of** the AS – spiritual and fundamental.

I realise it is a drastic statement to make. If nothing in your experience has prepared you for this you might regard it at best as just hot air and at worst as something negative and provocative. But before going any further let me refer you to

another drastic statement which came from the individual experience of someone who sadly passed away recently and who has been at the very centre of the anthroposophical life for the last three decades – Sergei Prokofieff. He was the most eminent and renowned anthroposophist who enjoyed more adoration than Steiner in his lifetime. He has also been the most prolific anthroposophical author, apart from Steiner.

Yet his bitter statement written on his deathbed about his inability to fulfil his most important anthroposophical tasks (*Deepening Anthroposophy*, May 2014 and *Newsletter*, June 2014) reads as the most devastating indictment. Not only of the leadership of the Anthroposophical Society (of which he was, for many years, the most prominent member!) and of the Society itself, but of the whole *anthroposophical environment*.

Indeed, the merits of Prokofieff's tasks and complains apart, can anybody imagine the spiritual and social context of the extraordinary content of his statement which came to his fellow anthroposophists out of the blue and post factum – and now post mortem? For him the whole thing was no doubt a personal drama. For the Anthroposophical Society, if taken at face value, it is a tragedy. But to the outside world, had it ever had a chance to know about it, it would have looked bizarre if not altogether a farce.

That 'the Anthroposophist number one', commanding the respect and authority throughout the anthroposophical world and occupying the highest anthroposophical office, had been powerless for over a decade, without anybody knowing about it, to do what he considered as most important for anthroposophy, the AS and their future – this beggars belief and borders on the surreal. This alone should tell you: "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark." It should at least serve as the writing on the wall and a wake-up call.

For years I have been trying, unsuccessfully, to talk about what is wrong **with**, and not **in**, the Anthroposophical Society on the pages of the *Newsletter of the AS in GB*. I have also addressed my concerns to some fellow anthroposophists directly, in groups and individually. I have not received a single substantial response. Mostly people responded with silence (as they seem to be responding now to Prokofieff's statement) or on occasions with the hackneyed cliché: "You are entitled to your own opinion." Besides it is a meaningless cliché in this case. Opinions can be right or wrong and can be dismissed, whereas Prokofieff and I speak, in our different ways, of the facts which are there and which will not go away. They have to be addressed, now. And what the facts, and Rudolf Steiner, say about **what is fundamentally wrong with the Anthroposophical Society**, I outline six years ago as follows:

THE SCHOOL OF SPIRITUAL SCIENCE

(Contribution of 2009)

In the June 2009 issue of the *Newsletter* of the AS in GB Sevak Gulbekian initiated a discussion concerning the Anthroposophical Society's decreasing and aging membership. He began his contemplations with Steiner's only stipulation for joining the AS: the applicant should consider "as justified the existence of an institution such as the Goetheanum in Dornach, in its capacity as a School of Spiritual Science". Students of anthroposophy familiar with the history of the Anthroposophical Movement know the origin, the meaning, and the significance of this stipulation. But to an enquirer unfamiliar with the Society's past, it might sound very strange if not altogether bizarre.

Indeed, in the first instance, it refers him to an organisation (School) other than the one he enquires about (AS). Secondly, this other organisation seems to be so special and important vis-à-vis the first one that the membership of the former is subject to some form of endorsement of the latter. Then if its special status stems

from its leadership functions why did it form itself into a special institution – an organisation within an organisation? No other public organisation – The National Trust, the largest membership charity in the United Kingdom, was mentioned by Sevak as an example – has such a structure and most certainly does not stipulate the justification of the existence of its leadership as a condition for joining it. All this leads a conscientious enquirer to the inevitable question: What is so special about this School of Spiritual Science?

Let its inaugurator give an answer. Steiner explained at the time that "what we need is the place which gives what is given nowhere else: namely, that which can guide man into the spiritual world. And that is intended to be the content, in the strictest sense of the word, of the School of Spiritual Science. It has always been so in the schools that have guided men into the spiritual life. There was first an exoteric circle and from this one passed on to the esoteric life. The leadership of the Anthroposophical Society desires to take this fact into account, for it is a fact that lies in the very nature of Spirit-knowledge"

More specifically, "The School will lead its members on into the regions of the spiritual world which cannot be revealed in ideas, – where it becomes necessary to find the means to express Imaginations, Inspirations and Intuitions." Here one attains "spiritual seership" and "enters consciously the worlds where spiritual Beings dwell and spiritual processes take place. He sees spiritual Beings and spiritual processes; and he sees too how the beings and processes of the physical world arise out of the spiritual."

Needless to say that Steiner spoke of and out of his personal experiences and not out of the books he read. And on the basis of his experiences he intended to create a Mystery Centre, a modern Initiation School. This necessitated, among other things, a structure, arrangements and stipulations which were both unique and strange in comparison to other organisations.

Alas, Steiner was unable to accomplish his task, even in its initial stage (he envisaged such a possibility: "It remains to be seen whether this First Class can be established in actual fact.") He left the physical plane together with all his unfulfilled plans and intentions including the content of the intended School of Spiritual Science. Behind were left the external physical arrangements of the School and of the General Anthroposophical Society created for the very special spiritual content. Normally when the spirit leaves the physical body – the body dies; this enables something new to be born. But sometimes the dead body is not allowed to follow the natural course and is artificially preserved and mummified.

Unfortunately this is what happened, and even worse, in the case of the GAS. Not only Steiner's now obsolete arrangements have been preserved, but also pretence has been made that his intended content is still there. This is a great spiritual lie with which the Anthroposophical Society has been living in the spiritual and physical worlds since Steiner's death. In the light of this aberration the membership numbers should be the least of the Society's worries. On the contrary, one should be glad that fewer people, especially young, are involved in this deception. What the Anthroposophical Society needs is to rid itself of this lie and to transform itself in accord with the existing reality.

But has it or rather have its members the courage, the inner strength and integrity to do it, or at least to face this lie and start talking about it, openly and frankly?

(The above quotes are taken from *The Constitution of the School of Spiritual Science*, London, 1964)