

Rudolf Steiner on the Urgent Need for Research Arising from Anthroposophy

It was the next to the last morning of the Christmas Conference for the Founding of the General Anthroposophical Society, December 31, 1923. The two morning talks dealt with aspects of scientific inquiry. The first, by Rudolf Maier, Stuttgart, concerned "The Connection of Magnetism with Light," and the second, by Frau Dr. Lily Kolisko, also Stuttgart, dealt with the "Physical Proof of the Working of Microorganisms." Rudolf Steiner introduced Frau Dr. Kolisko's talk with the following observations, which he then took up again after she had finished:

"If it should become possible for Anthroposophy to give to the different branches of science impulses of method which lead to certain research results, then one of the main obstacles to spiritual research existing in the world will have been removed. That is why it is so important for work of the right kind to be undertaken in the proper anthroposophical sense."

After her talk he continued: "These experiments are, from an anthroposophical point of view, details leading to a totality which is needed by science today more urgently than can be said. Yet if we continue to work as we have been doing at present in our research institute, then perhaps in fifty, or maybe seventy-five years we shall come to the result that we need, which is that innumerable details go to make up a whole. This whole will then have a bearing not only on the life of knowledge but also on the whole of practical life as well.

"People have no idea today how deeply all these things can affect practical daily life in such realms as

the production of what human beings need in order to live or the development of methods of healing and so on. Now you might say that the progress of mankind has always gone forward at a slow pace and that there is not likely to be any difference in this field. However, with civilization in its present brittle and easily destructible state, it could very well happen that in fifty or seventy-five years' time the chance will have been missed for achieving what so urgently needs to be achieved..."

Rudolf Steiner concluded by saying what it would mean if it were possible for anthroposophical research to achieve in five or ten years what, he foresaw, would take fifty to seventy-five years at the speed at which work was then going forward. And he ended by saying: "I am convinced that if it were possible for us to create the necessary equipment and the necessary institutes and to have the necessary colleagues, as many as possible to work out of this spirit, then we could succeed in achieving in five or ten years what will now take us fifty or seventy-five. The only thing we would need for this work would be 50 or 75 million francs, then we would probably be able to do the work in a tenth of the time."¹

The Challenge to us today

Fateful words! Sixty-eight of the seventy-five years of which Rudolf Steiner spoke will have come and gone when we celebrate New Year's Eve this year! Is our world less "brittle and destructible" today than it was in 1923? How is it now with anthroposophical research at the end of the century?

Certainly anthroposophists have not been "sitting on their hands" for the past sixty-eight years! An extraordinary amount of good work has been done in many fields, work for which one is deeply grateful. Yet,

must we not also admit that events in this "brittle and destructible" world have moved even faster, and have proven incredibly destructive? The issues which face us today require a new level of inner alertness, of presence of mind, and require us, as anthroposophists, to rethink our accustomed ways and to review our priorities. And this will lead us once again, I believe, to look at the question of research.

Two questions immediately arise: What is spiritual-scientific research? and: How can it be furthered?

In response to the first question, we should bear in mind Rudolf Steiner's observation quoted above that it is the "'impulses of method' leading to research results that are so badly needed."² Once the method of inquiry has been opened up, it then becomes possible for colleagues in the field, who are of open mind and of good will, to share in the detailed investigations. As we know, the methods of spiritual-scientific research have been described by Rudolf Steiner in many places and, especially, in such fundamental works as *Knowledge of Higher Worlds and its Attainment*, and *Occult Science*, Chapter V, on the path of knowledge. In these descriptions we find three stages: in the first, we take the results of spiritual-scientific investigation and, as students, make them our own through the activity of clear and selfless thinking which we have prepared to become the first instrument for higher knowledge.³ These living thoughts are ours because we have experienced them. In the second stage, we enter the realm of life, and, through meditative exercise, we acquire the capacity to perceive the living world as it begins to reveal itself in the language of imagination. At this stage of experience, the living images we perceive are the projections of supersensible reality, mirrored within our soul, not yet the immediate reality of

spiritual experience itself. It is only when the third stage is reached and we have the inner strength of activity to erase the pictured world from consciousness that we are able to enter that stillness of being, deeper even than outer silence, in which the spiritual world itself begins to speak and sound within our soul.

(Beyond this experience of inspiration, as Rudolf Steiner describes it, there lies, as we know, the realm of experience in which being knows being in the immediate cognitive experience of intuition.)

As one becomes familiar with the anthroposophical path of inner schooling, one discovers that what distinguishes spiritual-scientific research from the investigations of natural science is that, in the former, it is the researcher himself who is both instrument and knower, whereas in natural science the data is supplied by sense perception, extended through the use of technical instruments and theoretical models, which are then analyzed by the intellect, itself also a "given." Responsibility, therefore, rests with the spiritual-scientific investigator to a degree unknown in natural scientific research. With these brief reflections on the nature of the method of anthroposophical research in mind, let us turn to the second question: how can it be furthered?

In a certain sense, everyone who is working with anthroposophical insights, whether as an individual on the path of self-knowledge, or as a colleague in some one of the practical enterprises which have their origin in Anthroposophy, is already engaged in spiritual-scientific research! However, we are rarely conscious of this fact. We are constantly learning, comparing the results of previous investigations with the next new insights we have gained, and through this activity also expanding our capacities as a "knower", as one who is engaged in re-

search! Clearly, however, Rudolf Steiner had something else in mind when he spoke to the members gathered in Dornach nearly sixty-eight years ago. He was pointing to the urgent need to free qualified individuals from their daily tasks so that they could devote themselves on a fulltime basis to the work of research. He was thinking of institutes in which teams of individuals would work together, approaching the same questions from different sides, with the needed equipment at their disposal. (Much of which, in the scientific field, still needing to be invented, designed and constructed!) Within the anthroposophical movement in Europe, we have today numerous institutions in which research in the fields of pure science, of agriculture, of medicine, as well as in education and the arts, is going forward. The Goetheanum, in addition to its function as conference and festival center, and administrative headquarters for the world-wide General Anthroposophical Society, is also the research center for the School of Spiritual Science and for the work of its various Sections. Not only is work constantly going forward in the fields of physics, biochemistry, mathematics, medicine, agriculture, astronomy, but hardly a week passes in which one of the Sections is not meeting at the Goetheanum in pursuit on one or another aspect of its work. Significant, nevertheless, as these research initiatives are, they are able to achieve only a fraction of their potential because of a severe shortage of the capital which would be needed if they were to fulfill their own expectations, as well as Rudolf Steiner's!

To put it drastically, with very, very few exceptions, the situation for research is virtually non-existent! To my knowledge, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute in East Troy, Wisconsin, is the only institution in this country established exclusively

for the purpose of research. All other research is being done over and above the fulfillment of the daily tasks for which the institution was established, whether these tasks are teaching, producing medicaments, farming, caring for the handicapped, the sick or the aged, practicing medicine, or whatever else they may be. Yet, in spite of these severe limitations of time, strength and financial resources, there is a treasure of anthroposophical experience which could, and should become available and fruitful for future work. How can this be achieved?

The first step would seem to be one of consciousness: to recognize, that we must find the way to work for future values (the purpose of all genuine research), while meeting the immediate demands of today, tomorrow and the next day. And the very next step would be to recognize that the organs needed to do this already exist within the constitution of the Anthroposophical Society as Rudolf Steiner inaugurated it at the Christmas Foundation of 1923. If we turn to the Principles, or Statutes, of our Society, we read, paragraph 4: "Anyone can become a member (of the Society)...who considers as justified the existence of an institution such as the Goetheanum in Dornach, in its capacity as a school for spiritual science..." and in paragraph 9: "The purpose of the Anthroposophical Society will be the furtherance of spiritual research, that of the School for Spiritual Science will be this research itself..." So here we have an organ, charged with responsibility for spiritual-scientific research, placed at the very center of a society which is "in no sense a secret society, but is entirely public" and of which "anyone can become a member, without regard to nationality, social standing, religion, or scientific or artistic conviction." And the School, as inaugurated by Rudolf Steiner, is intended to be a renewal

of the mysteries in our time. The research, therefore, for which it exists, is to have the character of mystery wisdom and is to flow into practical life through the work of the Sections of the School. In this sense, the School of Spiritual Science is intended to become an organ for cultural renewal. At its center, in the so-called General Anthroposophical Section, which was originally intended to consist of three esoteric classes (see paragraph 5, Statutes), the individual undertakes the schooling of his or her thinking, feeling and willing, transforming them into the capacities of imagination, inspiration, and intuition, which are then the new faculties for research. With these new capacities, he or she may choose to enter a special field in order to become a working colleague, a "representative of Anthroposophy," within the particular Section of the School devoted to research in that field.

If, as members of the Society, we accept the fact that it is up to us to further anthroposophical research, and that the School of Spiritual Science is the organ where it is to occur, then we will seek practical ways to undertake this furtherance, the most obvious being financial support for the work of the School, both at its center in the Goetheanum in Dornach, and here, at the periphery, in the U.S.A. However, this financial support will not be truly fruitful unless it is rooted in understanding and genuine goodwill, in real moral support. This, in turn, must include the recognition that individuals may need to be freed, from time to time, from the demands of daily work in order to pursue the aim of research. Carrying this thought one step further, into the sphere of practical anthroposophical life, we must ask: Do you, in your anthroposophical life, in your anthroposophical institution, recognize that research is essential and are you prepared to translate

that recognition into practical terms, i.e. to free co-workers where necessary and to share in providing the financial means to enable research to be accomplished?

Let me now try to take these considerations one step further by illustrating them out of one of the fields of anthroposophical endeavor, in this case, the work of the Waldorf schools. The school movement in the USA is sixty-three years old! There are, at the moment, seventy-three recognized Waldorf schools in this country.⁴ Despite this remarkable expansion, it is, I believe, fair to say that the school movement is still in its first, pioneer phase, in which virtually all the resources which flow into the schools through training and experience are immediately absorbed in the daily tasks of building up and sustaining the existing schools or are poured out in the founding of additional new schools. An important, but extremely modest beginning has been made to attempt to "rescue" some part of the experience won during the past sixty-three years for the benefit of the movement as a whole through the establishment of the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science in North America, with a small Council of seven or eight persons to serve it. In addition, the training institutes constitute a focus of accumulated experience, which flows, through the training, into the movement as a whole. But the Pedagogical Section has not yet reached the point at which it has been able to take up a systematic development of educational research that might not only serve the school movement from within, but which could begin to penetrate American education at large, as a leaven which might eventually help to bring about that fundamental renewal that is so very urgently needed today.

If one asks oneself, what might the nature of such research projects

be, one could think of topics ranging from the more obvious and more easily defined, such as: the effect (negative as well as positive) of one teacher accompanying an elementary school class over several years, or the positive and negative values of the long "main lesson" with which each day begins; to such essential, but subtle topics, so difficult to assess, as: the role of sleep in the educational process, or the values of rhythm in human development. In the end; the selection of a topic, and the framing of a project, would be determined by those who feel called to carry it out; the suggestions just mentioned are intended merely to serve as a more concrete stimulus for further thought.

The author of this article can already imagine that he hears the incredulous voices of colleagues who may have read thus far exclaiming: What are you proposing? We can't spare a single colleague, in fact, we are desperately short-staffed as it is! And as for sharing costs! Well, you know the state of most Waldorf school budgets! To which he would reply: At the moment, it is a matter of reviewing our priorities and asking whether we can, in fact, continue to afford to ignore the need for more conscious concern for the research element in our total anthroposophical endeavors. After all, what intelligently managed business would forego "research and development" (R & D) in favor of spending its total earnings on current operations? (A consideration which American business is asking itself with hindsight as it struggles to compete in world markets with Toyota, Mitsubishi, and Daimler-Benz!)

To summarize, in conclusion: Sixty-eight years ago Rudolf Steiner looked to the future with anxious forethought and expressed the urgent concern – "not a wish, not even a possibility, but merely, perhaps, an illusion" – that research might be ac-

celerated to achieve in five or ten years, what otherwise he foresaw would take fifty or seventy-five. The world needs the fruits of anthroposophical research today even more urgently than it did then. Can we, therefore, as the anthroposophical movement in the USA, afford to ignore, even if, at the moment, only in theory, addressing the question of how to meet this need? We have the organs in place. The School of Spiritual Science is a presence on this continent, and the specific Sections are gradually establishing themselves. We have, for several years, included modest contributions to the work of the School and of its Sections in our annual Society budget. We have, this year, made a significant effort to meet the stated needs of the Goetheanum, in its capacity as a school for spiritual science, by instituting a standard, as well as basic dues-contribution for Dornach. Should we not, nevertheless, review our priorities and ask whether there may be as yet unexplored and creative ways to help to establish, and to accelerate, the investigation of those "impulses of method" which can lead to "certain research results?" This article is written in the hope that it might stimulate active consideration of these questions. Its author would be happy if it were to be discussed in groups and institutions, out of which a fruitful dialog might ensue. To underline these thoughts, let us turn once again to Rudolf Steiner's words, spoken specifically to the concerns of science, but applicable to every branch of culture, as he introduced Frau Dr. Lily Kolisko on the New Year's Eve morning so many years ago: "Today there is an abyss between art and science; but within science, too there is an abyss between, for instance, physiology and physics. All these abysses will be bridged if scientific work is done in the right way in our circles. Therefore from a general an-

throposophical point of view we must interest ourselves in these different things as much as our knowledge and capacities will allow. A scientific impulse will have to emanate from the Anthroposophical Society. This must be made evident at the moment when we want to take the Anthroposophical Society into entirely new channels."

The Practical Question to us as Members of the Anthroposophical Society

Would we support the establishment of a fund, which might be known as a "Future Value Fund," whose purpose would be to undertake research which could lead to beneficial results, but which, initially, represents a risk which neither an individual nor an anthroposophical institution could afford? Such a fund would probably best be administered by individuals who have gained the confidence of those carrying responsibility, both for the Society and for the School of Spiritual Science, because of their judgment and integrity. Individuals, qualified and committed to carry a project through, would submit their proposals to the Fund's trustees. Ideally, such projects would not only break new ground, strengthening and deepening our anthroposophical work, but would also serve as a positive contribution within the general culture of our time.

If institutions who draw life from Anthroposophy would consider setting aside some percentage of their annual budget for research, such moneys could be invested with the "Future Value Fund" and either be earmarked for a specific project, or placed at the disposal of the Section with which the institution is affiliated. It would, however, be of the very greatest value if funds could also be placed at the free discretion of the responsible leadership of the School. If this became a general practice, and

institutions were joined by individuals, this could, in time, provide the economic basis for research which would otherwise, in all probability, never be undertaken. It is also not out of the question that, if we take initiative in this direction from within the Movement, non-anthroposophical funding sources might wish to join to support one or another project of research.

It is hoped that the issue brought forward here may find active interest which could then lead toward practical realization.

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1 *The Christmas Conference*, Anthroposophic Press, 1990. pp. 208-209.

2 Although Rudolf Steiner in the passage quoted is speaking about research in the field of science, it is clear that the same line of thought applies equally to the fields of the arts, of education, agriculture, social life, etc.


3 See Schiller, *Rudolf Steiner and Initiation: the Anthroposophical Path of Inner Schooling*, Anthroposophic Press, 1981.

4 Schools that are either members of, sponsored by, or federated with the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America.

Reawakening to the Spiritual in Art

In recent years it seems a kind of reawakening has been taking place within the circles of art scholarship and criticism to what is being called "the spiritual in art". A number of books have opened an often objective and sometimes sympathetic eye to this theme and have openly acknowledged the influence of eastern and western occult movements on the artists of the twentieth century. Such influences as alchemy, hermeticism, mysticism, gnosticism, rosicrucianism, spiritualism, shamanism, Zen Buddhism, Theosophy, and Anthroposophy have been recognized. It is of particular interest that Rudolf Steiner's name is mentioned with ever greater frequency.

This new view of the esoteric aspects of modern art seems to have



Continuation of the Foundation Meeting

31 DECEMBER, 10 O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

DR STEINER:

My dear friends!

Once again as before we begin with the verses we have taken into ourselves:

Soul of Man!
Thou livest in the limbs
Which bear thee through the world of space
In the spirit's ocean-being.
Practise spirit-recalling
In depths of soul,
Where in the wielding will
Of world-creating
Thine own I
Comes to being
Within God's I.
And thou wilt truly live
In the World-Being of Man.

Soul of Man!
Thou livest in the beat of heart and lung
Which leads thee through the rhythm of time
Into the realm of thine own soul's feeling.

31 DECEMBER, 10 O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

Practise spirit-awareness
In balance of the soul,
Where the surging deeds
Of the world's becoming
Thine own I
Unite
With the World-I,
And thou wilt truly feel
In the Soul-Weaving of Man.

Soul of Man!
Thou livest in the resting head
Which from the grounds of eternity
Opens to thee the world-thoughts.
Practise spirit-beholding
In stillness of thought,
Where the eternal aims of Gods
World-Being's Light
On thine own I
Bestow
For thy free willing.
And thou wilt truly think
In the Spirit-Foundations of Man.

And drawing all this together in the remembrance of the Event of Golgotha which gives meaning to the whole of earthly evolution:

At the turning of the time
The Spirit-Light of the world
Entered the stream of earthly being.
Darkness of night
Had held its sway,
Day-radiant light
Streamed into souls of men.
Light that gives warmth
To simple shepherds' hearts,
Light that enlightens
The wise heads of kings.

Light Divine
 Christ-Sun
 Warm thou our hearts,
 Enlighten thou our heads,
 That good may become
 What we from our hearts would found
 What we from our heads would direct
 In light-filled
 Willing.

And we imprint this into ourselves:
 [Rudolf Steiner writes on the blackboard as he speaks. See Facsimile 4, Page XVII bottom.]

*Light Divine,
 Christ-Sun,*

We imprint it in such a way that we especially relate to it the closing words, which will be spoken in their threefoldness once more tomorrow: how this Light Divine, this Sun of Christ shine forth so that like shining suns they can be heard from East, West, North, South. To this Light Divine and this Sun of Christ we relate especially the closing words which were spoken on the first day:

*The spirits of the elements hear it
 from
 East, West, North, South:
 May human beings hear it!*

[As shown on the blackboard]

*Light Divine
 Chr.-Sun
 The spirits of the elements hear it
 from
 E. W. N. S.
 May human beings hear it!*

DR STEINER: We come now, my dear friends, to the reports announced yesterday. Would Herr Maier please give his report first.

Dr Rudolf Maier, Stuttgart, speaks about 'The Connection of Magnetism with Light'.⁶⁶

DR STEINER: It will be of the greatest importance that a truly anthroposophical method should be made customary in the different branches of scientific life by those individuals who are called to these branches within our anthroposophical circles. Indeed, seen from a certain point of view, this is of the utmost importance. If you seek the source of the great resistance of our time that has been appearing for decades against any kind of spiritual-scientific view, you will find that this resistance comes from the different branches of natural science. These different branches of natural science have developed in isolation, without any view of the world in general.

Round about the middle of the nineteenth century a general despair began to gain ground in connection with an overall view of the world. People said: All earlier overall views of the world contradict one another, and none of them has led anywhere; now it is time to develop the sciences purely on an exact foundation, without reference to any view of the world.

Half a century and more has passed since then, and now any inclination to unite a view of the world with science has disappeared from human minds. Even when scientific research itself urges an attempt to be made, it turns out to be quite impossible because there is insufficient depth in the spiritual-scientific realm.

If it should become possible for Anthroposophy to give to the different branches of science impulses of method which lead to certain research results, then one of the main obstacles to spiritual research existing in the world will have been removed. That is why it is so important for work of the right kind to be undertaken in the proper anthroposophical sense.

Today there is an abyss between art and science; but within science, too, there is an abyss between, for instance, physiology and physics. All these abysses will be bridged if scientific work is done in the right way in our circles. Therefore from a general

anthroposophical point of view we must interest ourselves in these different things as much as our knowledge and capacities will allow. A scientific impulse will have to emanate from the Anthroposophical Society. This must be made evident at the moment when we want to take the Anthroposophical Society into entirely new channels.

Now, dear friends, since our stomach needs a very tiny interval between the courses of this feast of spirit and soul, we shall ask Frau Dr Kolisko to give her report in two or three minutes' time.

DR STEINER: May I now ask Frau Dr Kolisko to give her report on her special field.

Frau Dr Kolisko speaks about the biological work of the research institute in Stuttgart, 'The Effects of Microorganisms'.⁶⁷

DR STEINER: Now, my dear friends, you have seen that quiet work is going on amongst us on scientific questions and that it is indeed possible to provide out of Anthroposophy a stimulus for science in a way that is truly needed today. But in the present situation of the Anthroposophical Movement such things are really only possible because there are people like Frau Dr Kolisko who take on the work in such a devoted and selfless way. If you think about it, you will come to realize what a tremendous amount of work is involved in ascertaining all these sequences of data which can then be amalgamated to form the curve in the graph which is the needed result.

These experiments are, from an anthroposophical point of view, details leading to a totality which is needed by science today more urgently than can be said. Yet if we continue to work as we have been doing at present in our research institute, then perhaps in fifty, or maybe seventy-five, years we shall come to the result that we need, which is that innumerable details go to make up a whole. This whole will then have a bearing *not only* on the life of knowledge but also on the whole of practical life as well.

People have no idea today how deeply all these things can affect practical daily life in such realms as the production of what

human beings need in order to live or the development of methods of healing and so on.

Now you might say that the progress of mankind has always gone forward at a slow pace and that there is not likely to be any difference in this field. However, with civilization in its present brittle and easily destructible state, it could very well happen that in fifty or seventy-five years' time the chance will have been missed for achieving what so urgently needs to be achieved. In the face of the speed at which we are working and having to work, because we can only work if there are such devoted colleagues as Frau Dr Kolisko — a speed which might lead to results in fifty, or perhaps seventy-five years — in the face of this speed, let me therefore express not a wish, not even a possibility, but merely, perhaps, an illusion, which is that it would be possible to achieve the necessary results in five or ten years. And I am convinced that if it were possible for us to create the necessary equipment and the necessary institutes and to have the necessary colleagues, as many as possible to work out of this spirit, then we could succeed in achieving in five or ten years what will now take us fifty or seventy-five years. The only thing we would need for this work would be 50 to 75 million Francs. Then we would probably be able to do the work in a tenth of the time. As I said, I am not expressing this as a wish nor even as a possibility, but merely as an illusion, though a very realistic illusion. If we had 75 million Francs we could achieve what has to be achieved. This is something that we should at least think about.

In a few minutes I shall continue by starting to give a few indications about the idea of the future building in Dornach, indications which I shall continue tomorrow.

(A short interval follows, before Dr Steiner's lecture.)