

2017/2018 Annual Theme

Light and Warmth for the Human Soul

How can the Foundation Stone Meditation promote peaceability – a hundred years after the birth of the social threefolding impulse?

Dear members of the Anthroposophical Society, dear supporters of the anthroposophical movement, dear friends!

In recent years we have approached the questions of self-knowledge and world knowledge from various angles in our work, asking also about the mission of evil in the evolution of the spiritual (or consciousness) soul. Current events, with the constant increase of wars, terror attacks, social tensions as well as the concentration of political power in the hands of individuals, affect us in existential ways. The loss of reality that comes with digitalization as well as new technologies which even presage the end of humanity confront us more urgently than ever with the question as to our true inner essence and spiritual destiny. How we think of ourselves – whether we see ourselves as animals or machines – will determine our reality.

The experience of the Goetheanum World Conference, which was attended by around 800 people from all over the world who embarked together on a searching, future-oriented process, was permeated by the Foundation Stone Meditation. The positive response we received has confirmed our endeavour to devote our work in the coming years – with annually changing emphasis – on the Foundation Stone Meditation, in the attempt to develop an inner organ of self- and world knowledge. Rudolf Steiner pronounced this “new Apollonian word” of the “Know Yourself” for the first time on 25 December 1923, when he presented the result of his spiritual investigation of the human being, after a maturation period of over thirty years, clothed in the mantric words of the Foundation Stone Meditation.

The radiant light of thoughts

Many members have been working with the Foundation Stone Meditation at a deeper level for some time. A fresh approach to this meditation can help us to embrace the impulses connected with the laying of the Foundation Stone

in 1923 in a new way and thus prepare the ground for harmonious and active collaboration. When we work meditatively with the Foundation Stone, a “light of thoughts shines towards us” and enables us to draw new inspiration for our actions from the “spirit holding sway in the radiant light of thoughts around the dodecahedral stone of love”. In the next years we would like to devote ourselves to the spirit of the Foundation Stone and encourage the striving for a deeper understanding of the threefold human being – of body, soul and spirit – through inner practice.

While there is a wealth of spiritual knowledge that has already been passed down to us, it is essential today that each individual ‘I’ finds and experiences the original impulse anew. For this to happen, self-knowledge must not remain a subjective act, limited to the understanding of one’s own individuality, but we must seek to understand what is universally human in us and in others.

The transformative power of the Foundation Stone

The objectivity of the Foundation Stone’s spirit light can transform the anthroposophical life. Rudolf Steiner saw the Foundation Stone as the ground on which individuals can erect a “building” together. In the years ahead we would like to use the three great exercises of “Spirit-Recalling”, “Spirit-Awareness” and Spirit Beholding” as the basis of our working together. Every year we will introduce a new emphasis within this overall theme.

Without neglecting the development of the spiritual (or consciousness) soul, working on the Foundation Stone can inspire elements of a socially effective and healing culture of the Spirit-Self. The three exercises must not be misunderstood as fixed spiritual techniques, however. They inspire spiritual life in three spheres and help us to develop the individual and social dimensions of Spirit Recalling, Spirit Awareness and Spirit

Beholding, each of which constitutes a separate whole. Next year we will focus on Spirit Recalling in particular. May the forces we can draw from the source be our guiding star!

Threefold practice

The appeal to the “human soul” addresses us as human beings in a threefold way. The three dimensions, in which we learn to feel ourselves cosmically embedded, connect us with the “Father-Spirit of the Heights”, the “Christ-Will encircling us” and the “Spirit’s world-thoughts”. This sense of being connected can gradually evolve as we respond through practice to the threefold call.

Who is it that speaks to us in this way? Who asks us to carry out these exercises? As we practise we become aware of basic orientations of soul and spirit, and we are gradually led to a knowledge that encompasses our earthly and cosmic being. This knowledge will increasingly form the foundation for new insights, feelings, experiences and actions in the world, with other human beings.

“Practise Spirit-Recalling”

The very first invocation, “practise Spirit-Recalling”, inspires a wealth of questions, moods and exercises. Remembering is the central soul activity of the ‘I’. When we focus on our memories, a wide landscape, built up in the course of our life, appears to the inner eye. Memories give us identity: we feel as individualities with our own distinctive biography that began at a particular point in our life on earth and evolves towards a point that is still concealed from us.

In the cycle that accompanied the Christmas Conference (“World History and the Mysteries in the Light of Anthroposophy”) Rudolf Steiner looks at the memory of early humanity, inviting us to consider entirely different soul configurations: post-Atlantean humanity needed to set up signs, or memorials, on earth to help them remember. In a later period memory became rhythmic and, with the beginning of Greek philosophy, our present temporal memory emerged. Could it be that even today we may find different forms of memory spread out across the world, and could these forms of memory aid us in discov-

ering and understanding other forms of consciousness? Anthroposophy asks us to give a spiritual direction to our memory through practising.

In the context of the Christmas Conference Rudolf Steiner mentioned exercises for the enhancement of memory. In the lecture cycle “Mystery Knowledge and Mystery Centres” he recommends that we meditate on an event in our childhood or youth. This memory exercise can help us to feel at one with nature and to experience the sunrise in a new way. As we enter ever more deeply into this experience, we can meet the first hierarchy in the radiance of the rising sun and establish a new relationship with the world of the Father. A spiritualized form of recall is now possible.

In extending our gaze beyond the boundary of birth we enhance memory. We may ask ourselves what decisions were made before birth that have led to our present incarnation. This is not about speculating or about finding out about our own karmic past, but about awakening to other origins and destinies, because they determine our work, our encounters and relationships in an essential way and confront us with challenges as we try to live and work together, especially when we meet people with whom we don't seem to “gel” or feel an affinity. Within the Anthroposophical Society we are called upon to work together as a community. A rightly cultivated memory can make us open for new ways of working together, for a new “sun karma” that will be a precondition for us to create a new culture of humaneness.

Review and Spirit-Beholding

The review asks us to develop our will and our thinking at the same time. The fourth verse of the Foundation Stone Meditation can therefore be seen as a practical exercise in spirit-recalling that takes us back to the “turning point of time”, the original Christ impulse, which gives light and warmth to our souls, keeps the darkness from taking over and enables us to behold the spirit. The review allows us to exercise our will by giving us the opportunity to go beyond the ordinary memory – which is merely a repeating of the past – and to acquire the ability to actually move in time. Re-

calling then means entering the realm of the timeless ether.

We are not meant to dwell on our own thoughts and views when we look back, but on what comes to meet us in the outside world, in reverse order, so that our will can tear itself away from the physical. We expand into the world around us and experience how this world has formed us and what we have become through it.

This kind of review, which can gradually become spirit-recalling, enables us to meet others in an imaginative way. The will effort involved in the review exercise promotes spirit-beholding. Because we have cultivated spirit-recalling, others can become image in us and express themselves imaginatively in spirit-beholding. And more than that: we find in this activity the foundations of the modern initiation experience.

How thinking becomes vision

Rudolf Steiner explained the transition from thinking to vision through will application in more general terms. When we make a true thinking effort, by adopting and practising a thought organism as outlined in *The Philosophy of Freedom* (GA 4), our thinking becomes free. At the same time, our will needs to become transparent to us. As long as we are ruled by obscure will impulses and as long as we refrain from gaining clarity about our own will, our thinking will remain philosophical. If we become more and more transparent to ourselves, however, through exercises such as reviews, and if we learn to behold the spiritual world through our will being, once it has become transparent, our thinking will become vision. By practising spirit-recalling we will become able to achieve spirit-beholding and receive impulses for our actions from the spiritual world. In taking this step of working on the Foundation Stone Meditation together, out of the whole of anthroposophy, we hope to bring these fundamental exercises to life. | *Christiane Haid, Goetheanum Leadership, and Jaap Sijmons, General Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in the Netherlands*

Recommended reading:

Rudolf Steiner: The Christmas Conference for the Foundation of the General Anthroposophical Society 1923-1924, GA 260, Hudson NY 1990, tr. J. Collis, M. Wilson. Lecture of 25 December 1923, 10 a.m.

Rudolf Steiner: Mystery Knowledge and Mystery Centres, GA 232, Forest Row 2013, tr. P. Wehrle. Lecture of 23 November 1923

Rudolf Steiner: World History and the Mysteries in the Light of Anthroposophy, GA 233, London 1997, tr. G. Adams. Lectures of 24 and 25 December 1923

Rudolf Steiner: Anthroposophy and the Inner Life. An Esoteric Introduction, GA 234, Bristol 1994, tr. V. Compton-Burnett. Lecture of 10 February 1924

Rudolf Steiner: Karmic Relationships, GA 240, London 1975, tr. D. Osmond. Lecture of 25 January 1924

Rudolf Steiner: Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha, GA 152, Great Barrington 2006, tr. M. Miller. Lecture of 7 March 1914

1 Rudolf Steiner, *The Karma of Untruthfulness*, GA 173b, lecture of 13 November 1917.

2 Rudolf Steiner, GA 260, p. 65 and 69.

3 Rudolf Steiner, GA 260, p. 28of.

4 Cf. Rudolf Steiner, *An Outline of Esoteric Science*, chapter 2 (The makeup of the human being).

5 Rudolf Steiner, GA 234, lecture of 10 February 1924 (on the fourfold metamorphosis of recollection).

6 Rudolf Steiner, GA 232, lecture of 23 November 1923.

7 Rudolf Steiner, GA 240, lecture of 25 January 1924.

8 Rudolf Steiner, GA 186, Lecture of 7 December 1918, p. 124-129.

9 See bibliographical notes in Rudolf Steiner, *Strengthening the Will: the Review Exercises*. Edited and introduced by Martina Maria Sam, Forest Row 2010, tr. Matthew Barton, chapter 5