

The History of the Johannesbau and Goetheanum Associations

GA 252

18 May 1913, Stuttgart

Automated Translation

4. To the Members of the Anthroposophical Society Regarding the Johannesbau

Brochure, based on the introductory words to the lecture of May 18, 1913.

My dear Theosophical friends!

Before I can begin with the subject of our consideration today, I still have a message to make to you. You know, my dear Theosophical friends, that some time ago the construction of a kind of Theosophical center for our work was undertaken, and that after much effort, we succeeded in acquiring a property in Munich on which the so-called Johannesbau was intended under the care and guidance of our Johannes-Bauverein, so that, in accordance with our intentions, this Johannesbau in Munich should have been there for certain central events.

Now, over time, more and more difficulties arose in terms of actually completing the construction in Munich in the foreseeable future; and one might be forgiven for suspecting that, once things have been going for a while, the story of this Johannesbau will be able to form a peculiar chapter in the illumination of contemporary intellectual life. I would like to tell you as dryly as possible, so that we can come to the consideration of our subject, what there is to say about the matter! It could easily arise the idea - since we find ourselves compelled to come to an end with the matter at a time when a number of us can still be in the process of leaving Munich and building it in another Otto — one could easily get the impression that the main reason for this was the general world's dislike of our theosophical spiritual life, which might have expressed itself in very little cooperation, say, from the administrative authorities or the like. I would like to emphasize that, although these or those entities of the earth, who are called spirits, earth spirits, human spirits, have also done what was necessary through all sorts of well-meaning newspaper articles or the like to stir up sentiment against our construction in order to turn the administrative authorities against us, that does not come into it; because judg-

ing by the overall situation, we can say that we have had no interference from any political or church authority. From that side, I would still have found resistance understandable. I do not mean to say that there were no moods – there were! – but they did not get in our way. However, if we had waited much longer as a result of the other inhibitions, we might have encountered obstacles there, but these factors could not be counted on as such until now, as ones that would have presented us with immediate, tangible resistance.

No, something has come into consideration so far, but it radically forces us not to be able to think further about the construction in Munich, something that, to characterize it precisely, could take quite a long time. It came into consideration that people who, according to their pretensions, should have shown us understanding did not show us this understanding. If we had encountered resistance from administrative or church authorities, we would have realized it; but what had to be reckoned with, and which must tip the scales, is that in our time every current of thought like ours is compelled to introduce something into the chaos of the rest of culture. Our central structure must, if it is to be anything at all, be something that is truly worth realizing. It must, of course, be something that not only fits into contemporary life, but something that expresses the very new and the freedom of our spiritual current in relation to contemporary culture.

If this is not understood by others, by the administration or the church, then one need not be surprised. But the misunderstanding came from another side: from the side that today, let's say, settles on having a judgment about what is to be considered artistic in the [world or what] does not have to be artistic in what stands as the outer cityscape. And when we come to talk about the artistic field today, we realize most of all how we are in the midst of a cultural chaos. But it is precisely here that one should have assumed that there is still so much sense of freedom in the souls that the artistic judgment should have been made: "One must respond to something that wants to arise from the center of a new spiritual life, so to speak." Instead, resistance arose, and one could see what was asserting itself under the flag of artistic insight as artistry, the kind of artistry that calls itself that and that has not the slightest understanding of what should be achieved through the artistic evolution of humanity.

It would be presumptuous of me, my dear friends, to recall the difficulties faced by a different artistic direction in the modern era – everyone knows that I am referring to the artistic creation of Richard Wagner. But even if it would be immodest to consider a comparison, the difficulties that we had to face with those who believe that they can judge dogmatically what is art or artistic could be characterized by studying the artistic trends that are built on the name of Richard Wagner. It was people of this ilk who threw the spanner in the works, people who had

once opposed the aforementioned school of thought and now, having grown old enough, are fawning on it.

You could hear judgments that were made from an artistic point of view, that could make you lose your desire. Those people who recognize human spiritual life in its becoming know anyway that it is natural for this to happen as well. All human schools of thought that represent an original could not place themselves in the middle of the other. I could make a long list. Those who could only place themselves in the world according to a principle that is already in the Gospels. That which today is often called art, which asserts itself here or there under the most absurd judgments, is a dying thing. And new cultures could never place themselves in this dying thing. Wherever we today expect to find the greatest blossoming, there we find dying; and the new cultures must take to heart the principle: "Let the dead bury their dead, but you, follow me." That which is dying must take care of its own burial, while that which is alive and germinating will not find a place there.

This is not a defeat, it is something that is perfectly justified in the normal course of evolution, and it would be pedantic to fight today against a judgment that presents itself to the world with such ridicule, as for example when some master builder says that architecture must be free, could not be guided by what should flow from some school of thought. Art itself should be free. I would advise such a master builder only, if he were commissioned to construct a residential building or build a train station, if it occurred to him.

Such absurdities, as flourish today in so-called artistry, which pushes itself forward everywhere with infinite arrogance and impotent judgment, is what cannot be emphasized enough. And it is under the influence of such currents that we finally, after we had tried hard to set up the matter in Munich, found ourselves faced with the necessity of having to reckon with never-ending periods of time; because we received a message that was roughly the same as "Wash my fur, but don't wet it" — something you can't count on at all when you have plans to work on, like our esteemed friend, Mr. Baumeister Schmid, who works so beautifully in complete harmony with us. We would have had nothing to do but plans, which would have been rejected with the comment, "They do not correspond to artistic taste," so that we would have had to work out plans again and again, and then someone would have said, well, something like, "summarize the masses better." I don't want to go into these things any further!

It was only necessary, absolutely necessary, to motivate an important step. And this step is this: that we will leave Munich with the St. John's building.

Thanks to the invaluable willingness and kindness of our Swiss friends, we will be able to carry out our building in nature outside, in Dornach near Basel. And our dear friends, when they want to get out in the summer to refresh themselves in the open air, will now have the opportunity, at the central point that is to be created there, to combine the impressions of nature and landscape with what we are doing in seclusion, and to enjoy seeing how our temple will rise, reaching far into the distance, a monument to that, my dear friends, which we may perhaps want to do, especially now, at this time, when our spiritual movement must stand entirely on its own two feet and is also forced to position itself as freely as possible in terms of space and location. I assure you, I went there in the summer and imagined how beautiful our building would be seen from all sides. So we hope that, out of free life, that which corresponds to our spiritual current, our central building, will rise at that site.

Now, my dear friends, although some things can be spared in the material realm through the kindness of our Swiss friends, many things will still be needed in terms of the willingness of our Theosophical friends to make sacrifices so that what needs to be done in this work can be done. I am convinced that anyone who is able to look at the facts objectively will agree that we are breaking free from our shackles and completing the matter as necessary. And it is necessary that we can complete our summer games in this central building in the near future.

If everything really does go well, we will be able to announce to you next time, with the help of the spirits, in the same way that the summer festival for the People's Theater in Munich was announced to you today, that the festival will take place in Dornach.

We would not have been able to keep to this date if we had wanted to fight the uninteresting battle – uninteresting not in the usual sense of the word – against the meaningless judgments of an unartistic present. What would have been opposed by – I do not even want to say error, because in this case it is not a matter of error – but what would have been opposed by presumption, will not be opposed to us by the magnificent nature that is to surround our spiritual work. Many will take joy in what will come about.

That, my dear friends, is what I had to put forward in order to, firstly, share a fact with you and, secondly, to provide some motivation for this fact, which marks an important step in our spiritual movement.

Of course, there might have been people who would have found it bolder to fight against prejudice and arrogance. But something else was important, and what has happened recently shows that something else was important. Now, my dear Theosophical friends, if we want to

take into account what is happening around us, we need time and we must not waste time with all kinds of fighting, but must fill it in the way that common sense can see needs to be done.

This information should be conveyed without anger or resentment, just in recognition of the fact that it had to be this way. And please regard it only as an expression of why the JohannesbauVerein was hindered from approaching you freely, so that one had to hear again and again: One does not hear what should happen; if one knew what should happen, one would be able to raise the funds much more easily. Now we are in a different position, so that everyone knows what is at stake. And what has been said may be said in such a way that it is spoken in the direction of your heart, that you take up the central building in your love. Consider what is to be created as your own, as something you want to help found for the spiritual life of humanity.

Each of us will contribute what we are able to according to our abilities. And in the future we will no longer be hindered by the side that was mentioned, but, depending on the help we receive from our dear friends, we will be able to accomplish what, under the present circumstances, must be accomplished quickly. I do not emphasize the word quickly without reason, my dear friends.

In the light of the above, the Johannesbau Association would like to make the following factual announcements:

The original program of the Johannesbau-Verein has not undergone any significant changes with regard to the actual central building. Essentially, the "School of Spiritual Science" will be built in Dornach in the manner planned for Munich; in some details, the freedom we enjoy in Switzerland makes it possible to develop the intended architectural ideas more completely, including their outward appearance.

On the other hand, the residential buildings will not be built to the extent planned for Munich. The rural conditions of Dornach call for a spacious design for our settlement, so that the individual villas will be built in the middle of gardens. However, the Johannesbau-Verein must leave it to the initiative of those who want to live near the central building to build these villas; it will devote all its energy to the design of the central building alone.

It would be desirable if the developing settlement of our anthroposophical friends were to arise around the central building in accordance with a unified idea, without the activity of individual tastes being too narrowly defined; "the individual villas should, so to speak, express both through their construction and perhaps also through their orienta-

tion, express that they belong to it.” In order to carry out this idea, knowledge of the underlying ideas and construction concepts, which have emerged over the course of a long collaboration, is of course necessary. This knowledge cannot be made available to our friends at the present time, for example through a publication, so that we are obliged to request that the plans of the villas to be built in the style of the Johannesbau be submitted to the building association, which will then, of course without wanting to claim any decisive rights, suggest those corrections that could bring the present project into line with the central building. Such a measure cannot be misinterpreted as an intended monopolization.

Centralization is also extremely important for the purchase of land. In Dornach we are dealing with a rural population; the land is divided into the smallest of plots, which are in the possession of the individual farmers. It is clear that conducting purchase negotiations with so many owners requires knowledge of the circumstances, and so on. Furthermore, there is a fear that if our projects become known too soon, this would lead to a huge increase in the price of the land.

Our friends who intend to either live permanently or secure a summer residence near the central building want to get in touch with Dr. E. Grosheintz, Basel, Holbeinstrasse 55, for the terrain acquisitions.

Dornach, in the canton of Solothurn, can be reached by train in ten minutes and by electric tram in half an hour from Basel.

Furthermore, we request that for the time being absolutely nothing about the existing projects be revealed outside the Anthroposophical Society, least of all in Dornach or Basel itself.

We would like to point out that we are thinking of setting up a “College of Spiritual Science” and urgently request that all other designations that could only mislead and antagonize public opinion be avoided.

Munich, May 22, 1915

The Board of Directors of the Johannesbau-Verein

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