

# The Building Concept of the Goetheanum

## GA 289

*9 October 1920, Dornach*

Automated Translation

### **2. The Artistic Impulses Underlying the Building Idea**

In today's lecture, my task will be to contribute something to the understanding of what lies in the artistic impulses that carry the building idea of Dornach, in order to then develop this building idea in more detail in the next of these lectures. It will be necessary for me to say something about these artistic impulses, so to speak, because strong misunderstandings have spread about them.

The point is, and this is clear from what I said here eight days ago about the development of the Dornach building from our entire anthroposophical movement, that the Dornach building should in no way create something that could be called the carrying of abstract spirituality into what is actually artistic. The Dornach building should be created entirely by artistic forces. And this building should mark the beginning of a development towards this goal, so that what works in spiritual science as a spiritual being can also flow out, stream out into artistic forms, into artistic designs and so on. This is something that had to be fought for against certain tendencies that very easily run in the opposite direction, especially in such a movement as anthroposophy.

It is very easy for all kinds of mystifying elements to enter into such a movement. These elements push towards the abstract through a false mystification, and which actually – because the artistic element must express itself in the shaping and forming of the external – bypass this artistic element and strive towards the symbolic, towards the allegorical. They want to keep the spirit in its abstract form, so to speak, and see in the outwardly shaped and formed only a symbolic illustration of the spiritual.

This leads to a killing, a paralysis of everything truly artistic. In this direction, due to the penetration of false mysticism from the theosophical into the anthroposophical movement, one has had to experience all sorts of things. For example, a play like “Hamlet”, which is an artistic

creation, was interpreted allegorically and mystically, so that one figure was understood as the spiritual self, the other as the astral body, and so on. There is endless allegorizing among those who would like to profess such a spiritual movement, and I once had to experience the following, for example: When I tried to discuss the well-known painting 'Melancholy' by Dürer in such a way that I traced everything that lives in this painting back to the chiaroscuro and showed how Dürer wanted to penetrate the secrets of the chiaroscuro, of the chiaroscuro, to contrast the light with the dark, the darkness with the light, in the most varied of ways, a voice was heard from the audience saying, "Yes, but can't we understand this picture on an even deeper level?" The deep interpretation was obviously sought in the fact that one wanted to extract from the artistically captured chiaroscuro an abstract-allegorical interpretation of what is depicted in the picture, which Dürer has already forbidden by placing the polyhedron in the picture to suggest how important it was to him to express the chiaroscuro variety that becomes visible when you compare differently directed surfaces, differently positioned surfaces of a polyhedron or the different surface layers of a sphere with any spreading light. That it is infinitely deeper to look into this working and weaving of light and darkness and to spread one's own spirit over this weaving of light and darkness, that for the one who feels artistically, it can be infinitely deeper than the abstract-intellectual allegorical interpretation of such images, such an interrupter had no understanding.

And so what is present in this building had to be seen as an initial, weak attempt, in many respects fought for in the face of those aspirations that strive towards allegory and symbolism. These can be seen sufficiently when one enters some particularly solemnly decorated rooms where Anthroposophical spiritual science is practised and sees that attempts are being made to begin with colours and all kinds of paintings and drawings, but that these attempts ultimately leads to nothing other than offending every artistic feeling by painting a hideous rose cross, when what matters is only the allegory of showing some symbolism in seven roses painted in a certain way on a cross. I must mention this so that, if anthroposophically oriented spiritual science is also to show its artistic fertility to the world, it is known that what is attempted artistically must not be confused with all the abominations that easily arise from symbolizing and allegorizing, especially on such mystical ground as I have indicated.

It is absolutely essential that the true spiritual scientist should realize through direct insight what the essence of the ideal consists in, so that he can find the transition from the ideal to what must be expressed in prose words, even though these prose words are only an inadequate means of revelation for the rich revelation of the spiritual world itself, and that this necessary prose presentation, which must also take on certain forms if it is to do justice to the spiritual world, is sharply contrasted with the actual artistic presentation, including that of the supersensible vision, which has nothing of symbolizing or allegorizing in it.

That is why I had to point out in the lecture I gave to you on declamation and recitation that it is nonsense to fantasize and allegorize all sorts of things into my mystery dramas that are actually anthroposophical theory. The point of the dramas is to be understood artistically; and I myself, if I may make this personal comment, suffer the most unspeakable pain when someone presents me with abstract concepts that are supposed to “explain” these mystery dramas. These mystery dramas have been seen and experienced down to the last word, down to the tone of voice, as they stand, and the one who introduces allegorization does not understand them. He cannot really bring out the measure of super-sensibility that lies in them, for he only imprints the intellectual concepts into what should actually be experienced in the artistic sense. And so it is with everything else that is to arise artistically from those impulses from which spiritual science itself arises.

I would like to say it clearly, although it may sound a little pedantic: no art can of course arise from spiritual science itself, as it is communicated in words; only allegory and symbolization can arise from it. But from those spiritual impulses that stand behind spiritual science, that drive spiritual science itself out of themselves like a branch, from those, as another branch from the same origin, artistic creation also arises. Therefore, those who understand spiritual science in the abstract and then want to translate it into art will never be able to create anything other than straw-like allegories or lifeless symbols.

It has been said many times that symbols and allegories can be found in this building. If you look at the building properly, you won't be able to find a single symbol or allegory in it. Everything is meant to be – although some things have been left in initial attempts – in such a way that it has flowed into the form, the design, the color. And because misunderstandings can easily arise in this regard, I would like to discuss a few artistic matters with you today, so that, as I said, I can get to the actual building idea next time and characterize it in very specific terms.

I would like to assume that, when we once had to perform that scene from the second part of Goethe's “Faust” in the carpentry workshop, in which the Kabirs appear, I tried to create the three Kabirs plastically from the supersensible vision that arises when one tries to penetrate the mysteries of Samothrace. So I tried to visualize these Kabirs in order to be able to bring them on stage. Now these three Kabirs were there in three dimensions. Then a personage who was very close to our movement wanted to give some other people an idea of these Kabirs, who could not see them here, or who wanted to have a souvenir of the way in which the Kabirs were vividly reconstructed here, and the question arose as to whether these Kabir sculptures should be photographed.

For someone who has a feeling for sculpture, however, every photograph of a sculpture is a killing of the actual sculptural work of art. And so I decided to simply reproduce these Kabir statues in a drawing, in chiaroscuro, that is, using a different technique. So from the outset they were conceived two-dimensionally on the surface, and so it was possible to photograph them and disseminate them through photography. So you see: if you really stand on the soil of those life forces that pulsate in spiritual science, then above all you acquire a truly artistic feeling for the artistic means you use, and you acquire emotionally, not intellectually, what lives in existence.

Let me mention the following example, which leads us more into the intimacies of the artistic empathy of the world process, which we then try to shape. Let us assume that one wanted to create a kind of sculptural representation of humanity, as I attempted in my sculptural group, which includes a figure similar to Christ (Figs. 94-98). If you want to create a sculpture of this representative of humanity, you would be led to feel quite differently about what is present in the formation of the head than about what is present in the rest of the human being's form, which lives outside the head.



**Figure 94**



**Figure 95**



**Figure 96**



**Figure 97**



**Figure 98**

In sculpting, you feel what appears as a huge difference in the human being. In sculpting, where one is dealing with the shaping of surfaces, one feels that a formative impulse must be at work in the head, which, as it were, pushes inwards, draws away from the outside, but which shapes from within; and one feels that in the rest of the human being, one encounters that which is shaped in precisely the opposite sense. It is not so important to say that one thing happens from within and the other from without – that would lead to an abstract, intellectual description again – but rather it is important to have the opposite feelings when developing any form out of the depths of the world process develops some form that can only be shaped

from the inside out, or when one takes out a form that can only be shaped from the outside in, in which one can see, as it were, how the external world forces concentrate and shape from the outside in.

If one continues in this feeling and sensing, then one comes to understand how, through having different feelings for the head than for the rest of the organism, one experiences something as a sculptor that is neither gravity nor vertically acting buoyancy nor even spreading force. Pure spreading force is what we feel in the light. Gravity alone is what we feel in our own weight and experience in particular in the aging of the human being, if one can take a look at this aging in true introspection. Of these two forces, gravity and buoyancy, one senses a kind of interaction in such a way that, I would say, the buoyancy forces, those forces that tear the plastic away from the earthly, can be felt more in the head, and the forces that work upwards from the earth's gravity and, as it were, drive the body upwards, these are felt more in the shaping, in the plastic formation of the rest of the body.

But, my dear attendees, when one has really felt this, and – especially when one has metamorphosed this feeling into artistic creation – when one really lives not in an abstract idea, but in this feeling and endeavors to bring into the material that which one feels there, then one feels a strong difference... [gap in the shorthand]. For example, in sculpture there is something to be sensed, such as the balance of two forces, of which the sculptor himself need know nothing. Even someone who knows about such forces as spreading force, gravity and buoyancy force, completely forgets it in sculpting; it is none of his business there, he lives purely in feeling the spreading of the forces of the surface, in feeling how the surface expands in space, or in shaping the surface itself. If you have not appropriated anything abstractly conceptual – that is, if you can completely shed the cloak of the ideal when you immerse yourself in artistic creation – then, in a sense, you become a different person emotionally when you immerse yourself in artistic creation; then you also acquire a feeling for the diversity of artistic means of expression.

And when one moves from working with sculpture to working with painting, one comes to say to oneself: All that one has to say about sculpture in terms of the way in which forces acting vertically and in the direction of propagation interact, of heavy elements and light elements, all that one has to have put aside when dealing with color and its nuances in painting. Because there it is about creating not out of the line, not out of the form, but out of the color, so that one completely stops feeling differently towards the head than towards the rest of the organism, as the sculptor does. In painting, one feels that difference disappear that arose for the sculptor between the head and what is not the head in a human being. This completely balances out and becomes something completely different, an inner intensity that cannot be repre-

sented by a contrast of lines, but can only be represented by penetrating into the intensity of the color nuances, so that it is not possible to go into detail, for example, on what still stands out very strongly in sculpture.

And if you want to overcome it, you can only do so if you push the sculpture to a certain degree of consciousness, as I did with my central group for this building. But if you move on to painting, it is a matter of thoroughly rejecting any thinking in lines and moving on to the feeling that creates purely from color. And however strange it may seem to someone who speaks of a spiritualization of art in a falsely abstract sense, it must still be said: for someone who thinks in terms of painting, the most important thing is that there is a certain color nuance at a certain point on a certain surface and that, when one moves from this color nuance to another point on the surface, other color nuances are there. It is about creating from color.

In this creative process, however, the artist is supported by what I would call the experience of color, the experience of blue, the experience of yellow, the experience of red. What the artist has, in experiencing yellow and red as if they were attacking him, and experiencing blue as if he had to chase after it with his soul, as if he had to expand himself, is what transforms into creativity within him and what then gives him the opportunity to transform the sensation into what is to become a work of art. If, for example, one is faced with the task of painting any surface, then it is a matter of nuancing between so-called light, warm colors and dark, cold colors. If one has the color experience, one can create out of this color experience, just as the musician creates out of the sound experience. Then it is a matter of the form arising out of the color itself, so that one does not draw and then smear color into the spaces created by the drawing spaces that arise through drawing, smearing the color in, but rather it is a matter of starting from the color experience and allowing the line experience, the form, to arise from the color experience. That is why I said at one point in the first of my mystery dramas - that is, I had a character say it, to whom I put it in the mouth - that the form must be "the color's work".

Fundamentally, we must be aware that all drawing and all thinking in drawing is actually a lie compared to painting. For example, when I see the blue sky, with the sea-green of the surface of the sea below, I have the blue of the sky above, the green of the sea below, and the line of the horizon simply arises from seeing, from the experience of color. And I am actually lying when I draw a horizon line that is not actually there (Fig. 114). This must now be thoroughly examined, otherwise one will not be able to enter into that world, which can be experienced through all the means of artistic expression, through the colors and their nuances, as well as through the concepts and ideas, if these concepts and ideas are really rooted in the spiritual and are not abstracted from ordinary human consciousness.

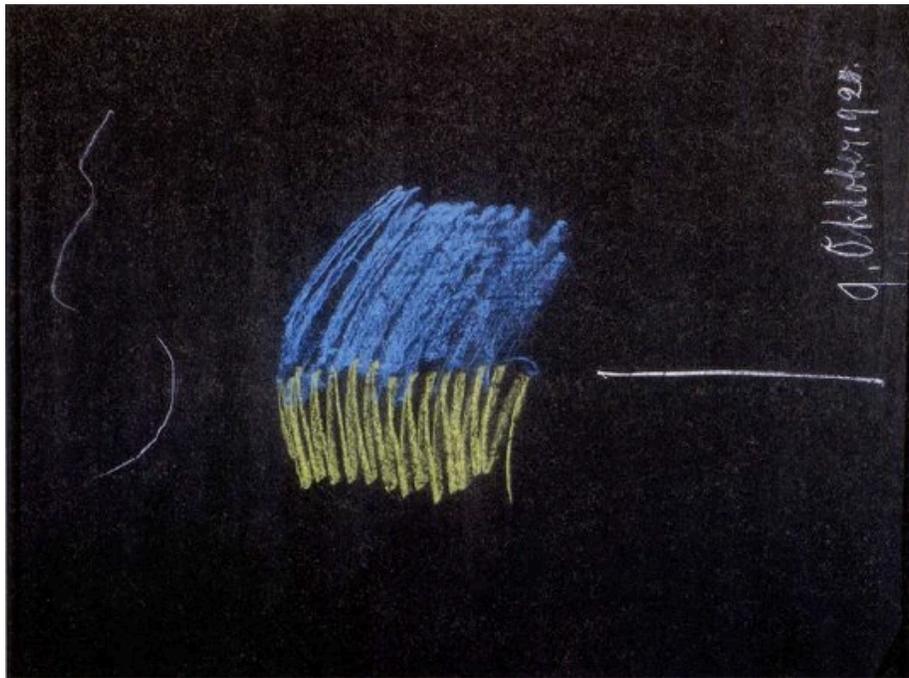
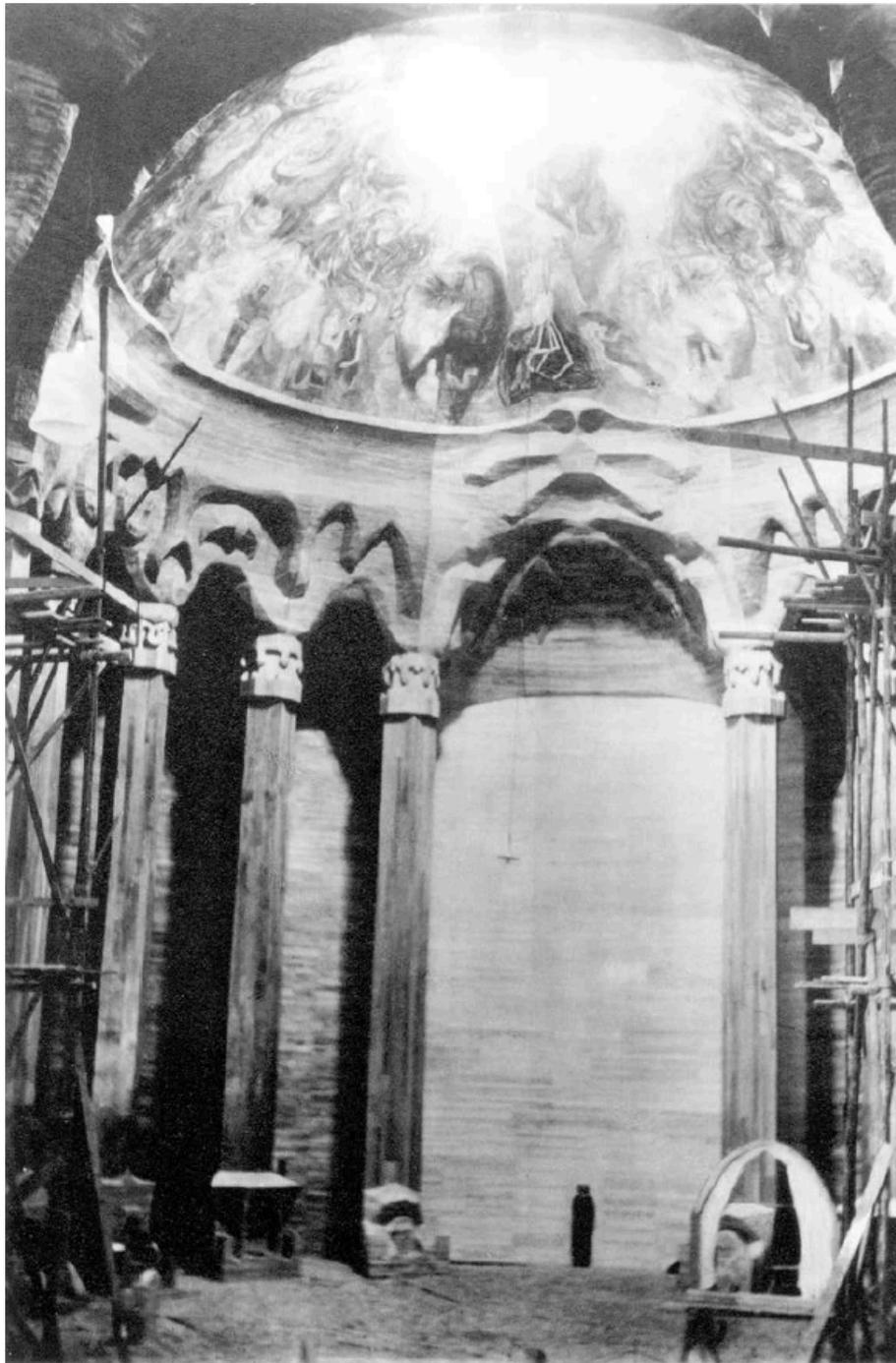


Figure 114

You see, here it is not so much a matter of expressing spiritual science in all kinds of forms, but rather of gaining impulses for artistic observation, which are just as necessary in the course of human development as spiritual science itself. But they are required as something special. It is the case that on the one hand there is the spiritual-scientific stream and on the other hand there is the artistic stream, which in a certain way must now also take on new forms. Therefore, I say to everyone who stands before this group, which is to become the central group here: One can feel something in the central figure like the Christ-figure, but it must be felt, it must not be thought that the name Christ is there. It will certainly not be written on the outside, but it does not even have to be thought, rather, the intuitive experience must take place within us, which draws our attention to how we must look at the matter, so that we develop reverence, develop high regard, develop the intuitive perception of the depths of the human being. So there should be nothing but feeling, nothing but experiencing in feeling, the same feelings that we experience, for example, when we immerse ourselves spiritually in the figure of Christ. But everything we experience spiritually when we immerse ourselves in the figure of Christ through spiritual science must not be carried over into what is formed plastically or pictorially. What is formed plastically or pictorially must be born out of form, out of line, out of surface. And this life in form, in line, in surface, in color, in word itself, is what later develops such forms, such painting, as it is to appear here in this building before you.

What I have said now has little to do with the building itself, but only with the artistic attitude and artistic feeling that underlies the entire building idea of Dornach. It should always be borne in mind that it is at the beginning of the development of that architectural style, that artistic language of form, which can be expected to flourish in a special way in the future. Because I would not rebuild this building in the same way a second time. Not because I consider the artistic attitude on which it is based to be misguided – that is not the case – but because everything that is alive is also constantly evolving, so that a second time all those mistakes would be avoided and everything that could be said in terms of impulses for perfection could be taken into account. But I see all this myself and take it much more seriously than those who often call themselves critics of the building. I know the mistakes very well today and know what could be avoided if the building were to be rebuilt, and what could be brought into it if it were to be rebuilt. And it is necessary that all the details of the building idea from Dornach be taken up in this way.



**Figure 57**

To take one detail, I would like to mention the small dome (Fig. 57). Later, at the end of this hour, we will raise the curtain and you can then take a look at the small dome. Above all, I would like this small dome to be understood in such a way that nothing abstract is fantasized into it. For in this small dome, in which I myself am essentially involved – this is of course not to say anything special about the also in turn initial and in many respects perhaps amateurish in the painting of this small dome – an attempt has been made to paint really out of color, out

of the color experience. In fact, this color experience should be understood in such a way that one sees, above all, the color nuance at a particular point. It could not be a matter of, for example, at a certain point where, let us say, the blue was to be emphasized, where the blue was experienced according to its position near the opening, further away from the center, contrasting with the color effects in the center, of thinking of a fist (Fig. 70) and paint it there because one feels a kinship of the nature of the fist with the blue color, but it could only be a matter of developing the color experience of the blue at this point and then letting the form, the shape, the essence arise out of the color. It had to become what it is there out of necessity.



**Figure 70**

From this you can see that it is not important to the person who originally gave rise to the idea of forming a figure out of the color experience of blue at this point, which then leads the feeling back to the sixteenth century, reminiscent of the Faust figure, but rather that it is important to him to give birth to form and essence out of the living color. And if, in the end, interpretations are attributed to the works, then one must be aware that these are interpretations from the outside, that they may help one or another subjectivity to experience this or that; but I myself prefer it if you completely forget, when facing this small dome, that there is something Faustian, something Apollonian ( Fig. 76) or of any doppelgänger (Fig. 84) and the like, and that you first surrender to the pure color experience from which the whole is born, and that

you are initially just as indifferent to whether there is a Faust crouching there or some other figure, just as the person who wanted to create from the color was indifferent to whether this figure emerged. It just came out because the world lives in color.



**Figure 76**



**Figure 84**

But one must not take the starting point from the linear or symbolic boundaries of the being; rather, one must take the starting point from painting from the color experience, from moving in color, so that the color and especially the color harmonization and disharmonization come to life as such. One will then see that one narrows one's view of the world if one tries to translate the intellectually abstract world view — even one that arises as spiritual science — simply symbolically, allegorically into color or into form. Rather, one will see that when one immerses oneself in color, the whole richness of the life of color overflows one and that in this immersion in the world of color one has, that one still discovers a new world. While with every allegory you only bring the world you already have into the colorful world, if you start from the colored experience itself, you discover a new world that is as creative in itself as the world you have in mind when you summarize the external natural fact in abstractions or in natural laws.

In this description — because everything artistic, when it is discussed, must be described — I had to show you how an attempt has been made here in this building, not to secretly incorporate anything into the plastic forms, into the color nuances, but to experience the secrets of these worlds ourselves, which give us the means to express them artistically. And when one experiences the secrets of these worlds, then one gradually frees oneself from all straw-like al-

legorizing and straw-like symbolizing. In painting, for example, one learns to overcome the line, even in the representation of the copperplate engraving or the woodcut, and to allow form to arise purely out of the contrast between light and dark. It is out of such experiences, not out of abstract thought, that the building idea of Dornach has come into being, out of what can be experienced in colour, in form, in surface, what can be felt as that which strives upwards, freeing itself from burdens, as that which works downwards, bearing burdens, bringing them to life within itself.

All this is here in architecture, sculpture, painting, even in the window panes - the nature of which I will also discuss next time - felt, experienced, not thought; because all abstract thinking is the death of art. The life of art is born only out of form, out of color, out of the burdened, out of the carrying, out of the rounded, out of the angular – I now mean “rounded” and “angular” as a verb. And when one can live in the round, in the angular, in the burden, in the carrying, in the arching, in the covering and opening, in the plastically rounding, in the surface giving, in the expressing the interior in the exterior through the special surface treatment, when one can experience what arises like beings in the waves from the surface of the sea, when one experiences from the living colors, then the forms are formed in such a way that they are a creation of the color. Then there is truly no allegorization, no symbolization; then, alongside that world of abstraction or the merely non-sensuous spiritual, a completely new world arises, a world that Goethe called the sensuous-suprasensible world. This world is not, however, killed by the merely intellectual, and it is brought to life when one knows how to set the spirit within oneself in motion, not by going so far in the contemplation of the external that the sensual contemplation leads to the linking of thoughts, but in such a way that one sees the supersensible directly in the external, in the sensual. When the inner life, which in Expressionism always seeks to give rise to thought, is restrained to such an extent that it does not reach thought, but remains in the mere experience of the formative, of that which permeates the surface with the intensity of color and when the world is experienced in this way, as it can only be experienced in the element of sensation, not in the element of thought, then this experience can truly provide the stimulus for a new art.

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