

The Story of My Life

GA 28

Chapter XXXVIII

In what is to follow it will be difficult to distinguish between the story of my life and a history of the Anthroposophical Society. And yet I should wish to introduce from the history of the Society only so much as is needed for the narration of the story of my life. This will be considered even in mentioning the names of active members of the Society. I have come too close to the present time to avoid all too easy misunderstandings through the mention of names. In spite of entire good will, many a one who finds some other mentioned and not himself may experience a feeling of bitterness. I shall mention in essential matters only those who, apart from their activity in the Society, had an association with my spiritual life, and not those who have not brought such a connection with them into the Society.

In Berlin and Munich there were destined to develop to a certain extent the two opposite poles of anthroposophical activity. There came into anthroposophy, indeed, persons who found neither in the scientific world-conception nor in the traditional sects that spiritual content for which their souls had to seek. In Berlin a branch of the Society and an audience for the public lectures could be formed only of such persons as were opposed to all those philosophies which had come about in opposition to the traditional creeds; for the adherents of philosophies based upon rationalism, intellectualism, etc., considered what anthroposophy had to give as something fantastic, superstitions, etc. An audience and a membership arose which took in anthroposophy without tending in feeling or ideas to anything else than this. What had been given them from other sources did not satisfy them. Consideration had to be given to this temper of mind. And, as this was done, the number of members steadily increased as well as the number of those attending the public lectures. There came about an anthroposophic life which was, to a certain extent, self-enclosed and gave little attention to what else was taking form by way of endeavours to see into the spiritual world. Their hopes rested upon the unfolding of anthroposophic information imparted to them. They expected to go further and further in knowledge of the spiritual world.

It was different in Munich, where at the beginning there was effective in the anthroposophic work the artistic element. In this a world-conception like that of anthroposophy can be taken up quite otherwise than in rationalism and intellectualism. The artistic image is more spirit-

like than the rationalist concept. It is also alive and does not kill the spiritual in the soul as does intellectualism. In Munich those who gave tone to the membership and audience were persons in whom artistic experience was effective in the way indicated.

This condition resulted in the formation of a unified branch of the Society in Berlin from the beginning. The interests of those who sought anthroposophy were of the same kind. In Munich the artistic experiences brought about certain individual needs in different groups, and I lectured to those groups. A sort of compromise among these groups came to be the group formed about Countess Pauline von Kalckreuth and Fräulein Sophie Stinde, the latter of whom died during the war. This group also arranged for my public lectures in Munich. The ever-deepening understanding in this group brought about a very beautiful response to what I had to say. So anthroposophy unfolded within this group in a manner which can truly be designated as very satisfying. Ludwig Deinhard, the old theosophist, the friend of Hübbe-Schleiden, came very early as a very congenial member into this group, and this was worth a great deal.

The centre of another group was Frau von Schewitsch. She was an interesting person, and for this reason it was well that a group formed around her also which was less concerned in going deeply into anthroposophy than in becoming acquainted with it as one of the spiritual currents among those of the period.

At that time also Frau von Schewitsch had given to the public her book *Wie ich mein Selbst fand*.¹ It was an unique and strong confession of theosophy. This also made it possible for this woman to become the interesting central figure of the group here described.

To me and also to many who formed part of this group, Helene von Schewitsch was a notable part of history. She was the lady for whom Ferdinand Lassalle came to an early end in a duel with a Rumanian. She was afterwards an actress, and on a journey to America she became a friend of H. P. Blavatsky and Olcott. She was a woman of the world whose interests at the time when I made these lectures at her home had been deeply spiritualized. The impressive experiences through which she had passed gave to her appearance and to everything she did an extraordinary weight. Through her, I might say, I could see into the work of Lassalle and his period; through her also many a characteristic of H. P. Blavatsky. What she said bore a subjective colouring, and a manifold and arbitrary form of fantasy; yet, after allowing for this, one could see the truth under many veils, and one was faced by the revelation of an unusual personality.

Other groups at Munich possessed different characteristics. I recall a person whom I met in several of these groups – a Catholic cleric, Müller, who stood apart from the narrow limits of the Church. He was a discriminating student of Jean Paul. He edited a really stimulating periodical, *Renaissance*, through which he fostered a free Catholicism. He took from anthroposophy as much as was interesting to him from his point of view, but remained always sceptical. He raised objections, but always in such an amiable and at the same time elementary fashion that he often brought a delightful humour into the discussions which followed the lectures.

In pointing out these as the opposing characteristics of the anthroposophic work in Berlin and in Munich, I have nothing to say as to the value of the one or the other; here there simply came to view differences among persons which had to be taken into account, both of equal worth – or at least it is futile to judge them from the point of view of their relative values.

The form of the work at Munich brought it about that the theosophical congress of 1907, which was to be set up by the German Section, was held there. These congresses, which had previously been held in London, Amsterdam, and Paris, consisted of sessions in which theosophical problems were dealt with in lectures and discussions. They were planned on the model of the congresses of learned societies. The administrative problems of the Society were also discussed.

In all this very much was changed at Munich. In the great Concert Hall where the ceremonies were to take place, we – the committee of arrangements – provided interior decorations which in form and colour should correspond artistically with the mood that dominated the oral programme. Artistic environment and spiritual activity were to constitute a harmonious unity. I attached the greatest possible value to the avoidance of abstract inartistic symbolism and to giving free expression to artistic feeling.

Into the programme of the congress was introduced an artistic representation. Marie von Sievers had long before translated Schuré's reconstruction of the Eleusinian drama. I planned the speeches for a presentation of this. This play was then introduced into the programme. A connection with the nature of the ancient mysteries – even though in so feeble a form – was thus afforded; but the important thing was that the congress had now an artistic aspect, – an artistic element directed toward the purpose of not leaving the spiritual life henceforth void of art within the Society. Marie von Sievers, who had undertaken the role of Demeter, showed already in her presentation the nuances which drama was to reach in the Society. Besides, we had reached a time when the art of declamation and recitation developed by Marie von Sievers by working out from the inner force of the word had arrived at the most varied points from which further fruitful progress could be made in this field.

A great portion of the old members of the Theosophical Society from England, France, and especially from Holland, were inwardly displeased by the innovations offered them at the Munich congress. What it would have been well to understand, but what was clearly grasped at that time by exceedingly few, was the fact that the anthroposophic current had given something of an entirely different bearing from that of the Theosophical Society up to that time. In this inner bearing lay the true reason why the Anthroposophical Society could no longer exist as a part of the Theosophical Society. Most persons, however, place the chief emphasis upon the absurdities which in the course of time have grown up in the Theosophical Society and have led to endless quarreling.

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