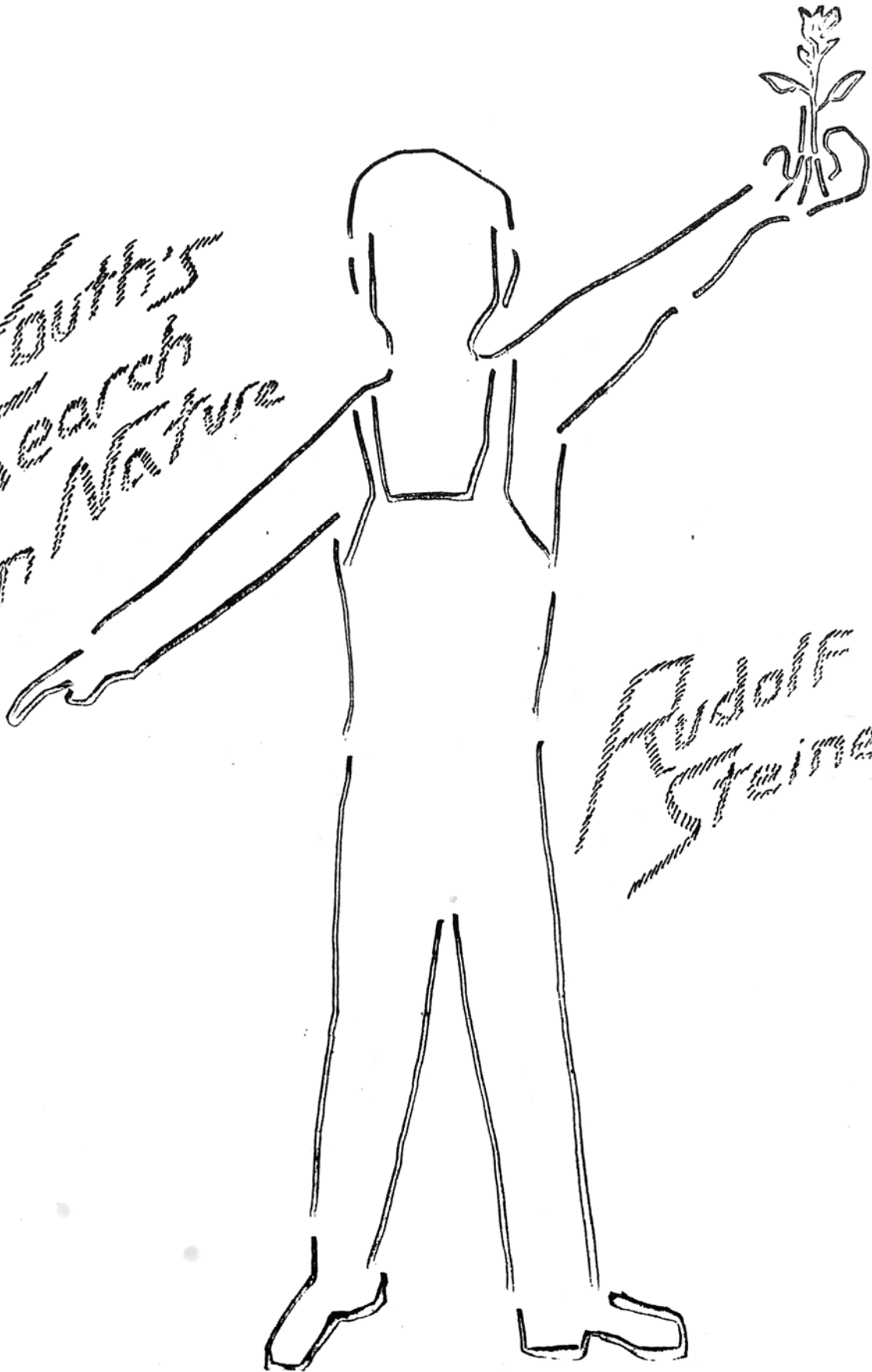


Youth's
Search
in Nature



Rudolf
Steiner

LECTURE

given to the young people
in Koberwitz

June 17, 1924

by Rudolf Steiner

The youth movement of today is again searching for nature; anthroposophical youth is also searching for nature, but it is + searching for the spirit in nature. This searching lives as a kind of challenge to the spirit in the hearts of this youth movement. But there was little understanding of this challenge from civilization of previous centuries. For mankind has, since the fifteenth century, by degrees had to lose the spirit, through its special world karma.

And it is most easy to lose the spirit in nature when one is already on the way to losing it generally. For you must remember that death is the fundamental condition of nature. You must not forget that life, in order to exist, always needs death. Imagine how, into all living substance, there must be inserted as a kind of boney or other structure what was received out of the cosmos as the dead. During our whole earthly life, therefore, we carry death within ourselves, through the fact that we have to contain un-living dead substance. We must contain it. And in olden times one knew that it is death through which what is alive can receive revelations of the spirit. And out of Latin times there sounds still a phrase like the following one:

"In sale sit sapientia."
(Wisdom rests in the salt.)

And one felt in olden times, when traditions of the old instinctive clairvoyant wisdom still existed, that the dead salt, with which the bones and any kind of framework are built up, differentiates man from other beings around him - those who, through the lack of such dead inner frameworks, are unable to receive enough of spiritual light, of sapientia (wisdom). But we live again in a time of transition, where the young person feels that even in nature he would somehow find the death of the spirit if he approached it with the conceptions of the last century, with the traditional attitude of the last century.

Nature builds up for itself a crystal penetrated by wisdom. This crystal can delight us when we wander out into nature. But at the same time we must realise that the gods had to die - not an earthly death but the death of transformation (the transition into what can be experienced consciously) in order to revive in the light-gleaming forms of the crystal. And we have today to bring into our feeling again, when we look out into what is dead,

that there shines through to us life of the gods which for centuries has lain unconscious in nature. We must find within our souls the possibility to sense this light that can come towards us from the sun as the light of gods that we can meet, quickening our hearts towards everything in nature.

Let us today try to feel this divine world of soul resting for thousands of years in the whole heavenly-shining nature around us. The soul has much to search for here. And the youth of today is searching for old, very old, knowledge of mankind - this old knowledge which already in old Saturn times was connected with man, and which, when the time of Sun and Moon came, entered a kind of world sleep, a kind of resting consciousness, in order to form out of its own spirit-substance the foundation for what we today call nature. The soul can just divine but not really penetrate through this nature to the spirit - and so nature, even in summer, for the young-feeling heart of today, appears like a snow-mantle, of shining bright spirit-crystals: but it carries within itself death - that means unconsciousness - and challenges the soul to feel deeply underneath this icy soul-mantle the ancient fiery living deeds of the word, radiating from the center of the earth.

This is complicated when thus spoken out, but it is actually very simple when it is truly sought for by the youth of today. And when from somewhere there sounds the call for nature, it * arises out of the youth-filled soul desiring to have a memory, a unification with the divine source of everything which is earthly and starry. One can sense this when today's youth again is searching for nature. There lies something of a most solemn world-karma in the youth of today thus searching for nature and spirit, something of the world-karma which can only be truly understood in the seriousness of the soul.

Let us only imagine how in times past - we call it today the time of Rousseau (a German parallel is the "Sturm und Drangzeit" preceding Goethe and Schiller) - let us think back how in this time the call for nature, in an abstract literary kind of way, sounded through wide realms of civilization. Let us imagine those warm intense calls for nature coming from the soul of Rousseau. Yes, many will still today be gripped when they listen to these calls. But what has followed these calls for nature? "Nature, we want Nature again", those young people were calling.

Goethe himself called out, in the way that old age speaks, disturbing our easy comfort by his words, "Nature, we are surrounded and embraced by her; unmasked and unwarned she receives us into the circle of her dance". He did not want to bring into consciousness what appeared among the Rousseau-ists as the call for nature. And if one tries to imagine oneself as Goethe of that time, approaching those calls of the others, one can experience, even today, a kind of uncomfortable shiver running through

one. One feels the shudder he experienced in meeting this call for nature. It seemed to him un-natural in itself: he wanted to be received into the dancing circle of nature without being asked to be accepted, and he felt, "Nature does not ask, but neither does nature want."

Then in the nineteenth century there came the fulfilment of that call for nature. It was the so-called knowledge of nature, the ever-and-again resounding call for nature in the stiffest materialistic sense. Not only in connection with knowledge but in connection with all that is life. Thus a horrible fulfilment of Rousseau-ism entered the 19th century: a kind of kingdom of demons started to titter when those people around Rousseau were calling for nature, and they were laughing with scorn when they let nature approach mankind in an Ahrimanic figure.

This is the background; and when we then look into the mid-dleground there appears the mood of a tragic karma: a mood where what is lying in the souls of the youth of today can only with the greatest inner difficulties rise into full consciousness. Something that since the end of the Kali Yuga has been lying dormant. This call for nature must be found again: the old creative working of gods that is present in all nature - in earth, in fragrance, in all that is weaving, shining and living. This old spirit of nature must be found. But how can we avoid the rain of wild demons? How can we avoid what like a wild shower of illusions has followed the call for nature in the 19th century? The 20th century may not become a materialistic one. It is not allowed to become it. And thus the voice of karma calls in the souls of the young people today: if you let the 20th century become materialistic as the 19th century has been, you have lost much, not only of your own humanity, but of what is human in the whole civilization of mankind. If one is able to hear such voices, this can be felt again and again where circles of young people come together. It is this that re-assures so many members of such youth movements, even though their feeling is indefinable. You can experience these young souls as undecided, uncertain, turning from one path to another - and still there arises out of this uncertainty and undecidedness a single-mindedness, not yet light-filled but carrying a certain strength within itself.

This strength may not be broken. It is not allowed to be broken. Towards this Anthroposophy wants to contribute, because it not only perceives the abstract spirit for which the nineteenth century was calling out also, but it believes that it can perceive the concrete spirit in all details of life - in the roots of the plants, in the fruits of the plants, in the flowering of the plants, in the deeds of the light above the plants, and in the grace of warmth penetrating the plants. And it believes that what has been given to mankind as the animal-kingdom can be experienced as a call of the conscience. It believes that much is to be healed in this animal kingdom. The animals are on earth for the sake of man. In order to approach the animal kingdom in the right way, it is necessary to feel and sense and finally even recognise in all nature the individual spiritual beings.

This can also be felt today when the necessity arises not only to speak in a general way about the spirit, but to search for the working of the spirit right into the details of agricultural and other natural activities. Therefore I felt a deep inner happiness when you had the idea that we could exchange a few thoughts today.

You see, the situation is like this. What makes those who to a certain extent have found their way into the anthroposophical movement again and again uncertain, what makes one feel that strong support is needed in order to find the right way, has the following reason: the young people who in the fulness of their hearts feel: "We must, in a new way, find an approach to man different from what has come to us from the wisdom of the past centuries" are again and again - mostly through outer conditions - thrown back into the old track. It was not possible for the soul to perceive clearly what, since the end of the Kali Yuga, apparently has to remain unclear - to perceive the hidden searching for mankind which in our time is not openly revealed: to find the way into nature out of nature itself, to find the way into the spirit out of the spirit itself.

You see, our dear friend Ritter told how he had been a peasant's child and how he had grown out of this peasantry. This process of growing out of peasantry could be experienced in its archetypal meaning in a time when you people here were not yet even lying in your cradles. Then already this time of uncertainty began. You see, the life of the peasant, as it has been through the course of centuries, is actually today only a myth. In its soul-being it is quite different from Natural Science and the so-called civilization which have become so remote from all true existence. And in the sixties and seventies of the last century one could already sense how this spirituality which still lived within peasantry was slowly dying out: one could often observe it.

The peasants were seized by the impulse that their sons should study. That was already the first sign of abstract ideas coming up among peasants in the last third of the 19th century, this idea that their sons had to study. This is already quite different from how it was with that earlier peasantry which truly lived together with nature. Certainly the sons already studied then, but not in the same sense as later, not as they did in the last third of the 19th century. In the consciousness of the peasants those sons did not study but they became priests, and to become a priest was in the consciousness of the peasant to search for the way to the spirit. It was this search for the spirit that the peasant wanted when he sent his son to educational institutions. But in the last third of the 19th century this changed, and those educational institutions became more and more void of spirit. A spiritual poverty arose. At the same time also the consciousness of the peasant changed. The son had to study, and added to this there came another experience: the son is becoming a stranger to us; he enters into quite a different life; he does not belong to us any more.

One can only touch on these things, for they can actually only be truly understood in life. In the coarsening of life towards the end of the nineteenth century there arose just within peasantry a kind of disgust and sometimes even hatred for all that was spiritual. I still remember a very nice picture out of a peasant's calendar which was surely thought out by a journalist but which arose out of the mood of the seventies. In a certain region of Middle Europa a peasants' union was founded. The peasants banded themselves together and the representative of such a peasant union was depicted on this picture with a tassel cap pulled down far over his ears, and he was saying: "No lawyer, no teacher, is allowed to enter this union of peasants." You see, thus was the consciousness. One did not know any more what to do with learning in any sphere, not even in the sphere of theology. One thought it was especially clever to exclude the so-called learnedness from this peasants' union.

All this expressed in reality a kind of outlook which towards the end of the 19th century produced human beings who actually were only representations. Human beings became actually only representations. There were no longer human beings walking on the earth: with a few exceptions, they were only images. And when the change from the 19th to the 20th century came, the civilized world was populated not by human beings but by images. The time had come when what should have been true was changed in a strange way into its opposite. You see, sometimes one's heart was pained by the facts put forward as truths. So the teaching arose which even encouraged an over-population of certain areas: if many people are born, this is a sign that all goes well. One urged, so to speak, the increase of population. This increase of population was thought to indicate true progress. If you however, looked at it spiritually, you had to say: through the influence of such a world conception, more and more souls entered the earth from the spiritual world before their time - beings who actually were spiritually premature, and in reality did not find the earth. The human beings of the last third of the 19th century have actually not found the earth. They were on the earth without finding the content of their true being, and went about as marionette-like intellects, not as human beings.

And so there came this 20th century, in which numerous souls were born who, estranged from nature, walked about as images just as others had walked about as shadows. Meeting these human representations they felt how deeply they were deprived of all that is truly human. They felt they had to search to find it again.

But from those olden times there have remained all kinds of outer social institutions in which the young people experience a kind of soul-depressing influence. If we were already in a position to influence outer life as much as we can awaken the souls through Anthroposophy, if we were in the position of being able to change outer life, many things would be quite different. Man would then not always have to say that Anthroposophy should become concrete, but would be able to experience: Anthroposophy might become world transforming if outer powers would not try to prevent it.

prevent it. Think only how we, as young people of today develop. Yes, Dr. Ritter had the chance in the early years of his life to enter such a great agricultural estate as K fering, which had still retained its spiritual nature when already everywhere around the world was floundering in materialism. That is indeed a phenomenon. But such a phenomenon will always exist where you will find an outer refuge for what youth is searching for. Anthroposophy has to stand in the background, because one does not strive for the intellect within Anthroposophy: one does not study, but one tries in the best sense of the word to become a priest in learning. And if one can look at this strange and quick transition from the old way of becoming a priest, which has turned into a lie, to this new way of becoming a priest, one can meet something quite special. And it is strange what has just occurred at K fering: I would like to describe it to you so that you can understand it more easily. It is the way in which the estate-owner has first to undergo an anthroposophical transformation training, which then leads to the anthroposophical transformation of the whole estate.

We have to learn to understand with our heart what it is that transforms the intellectual conception of the spirit that remains estranged to nature, into the spirit which has been truly worked for, which itself finds its way again into the natural world of facts. Therefore I have tried in this course to formulate my words out of real experience. Today you cannot find the spirit unless you try to find the possibility of expressing it in natural words, and through this the inner experiences (empfindungen) will also grow strong again. Imagine, think, that you transform what you may already know today: that the time of Michael is here. Think of transforming what thus only seems to live in the ideas, into true contemplation. Then you will be on the right path. You are on the right path if you transform the ideas into contemplative devotion. Imagine only how everything would change. For meditating means to transform what you know into contemplative devotion. Just the single concrete objects. - If you express such things as I have now done it many times, you lay yourself open to being called impudent. For those who, in the 20th century, have become old - not in a spiritual but in a conventional sense - will not experience the deep feeling man can have if he is compelled to look upon his brain as something which has developed in a way similar to dung (though in a different direction). You have to sense what is thus working into man, strengthening him: the brain forms itself out like a heap of dung. Feel how you, when using this manure, are returning it to the world-creating forces, so that the spirit can receive it in a much higher sense than the human spirit can receive what is given to it as material substance from within.

• Let us now look at man: he takes in outer material substance, and has no idea what he is receiving through the plant, what he is taking in from without with the cultivated plants. And now it starts to work within him through the power of the gods, when he transforms, through the process of taste, what he has received from without. This process by which matter is transformed he

retains still as a conscious sense-experience. Then it leaves his consciousness and a mighty all-wise process sets in. And what is thus unconsciously worked through finally ends in the dung-heap filling our brain. Let us learn to think that we as men are urged to hand this dung in the right way over to the world: we should not want to transform it into toy machines for the children; it is mainly in this way that man of the present day uses his brain. He does not manure the fields of the spirit with his brain in order that the spirit might work in them: he makes mechanism out of all that exists. And you see, if you know what the brain is predestined for (to manure the fields of the spirit for the gods which come down to man) - and if you thus acquire a devotion-^{al} regard which can arise out of such an inward conception of these questions - if you learn to divine what takes place in the unconscious and in the superconscious and then start to take up nature which is created after the image of man into your field of recognition, and thus perceive nature in connection with the process of the dung, you can experience how within nature slowly and deliberately there rises into consciousness what otherwise works unconsciously within man. Then man learns truly, on his own, to renew what for long has only lived as a tradition. What lived as belief and what was - like many other things that had to be carried over from old clairvoyant times - still penetrated by nature, lives understood in the Romanism of recent times: for instance in such a saying as "Naturalia non turpia sunt" (all things are beautiful in nature). If they do not appear beautiful, it is only because man cannot see their beauty, cannot sense their fragrance. Try to bring together what has lived as conception in recent times. Let us look at the whole rhythm of nature in the west. A big part of how one tries to imitate nature consists in the fact that one is washing. To wash and clean is naturally quite good, but in the way man practices cleaning in these European-American regions, he just sweeps and washes away all that is nature. Into this process of cleaning man dopes himself. We may remember how in Egypt also there was a lot of washing. The Egyptian process of cleaning was still something real, but later in Greece it was rather forgotten, and was only remembered when one still spoke of Katharsis.

Yes, all this makes us aware when we go out into nature, to the surface of the earth, that now we are in the abdominal region of the cosmic being. We may then also regain this feeling which I actually only still experienced when I as a very small child communed with miners (not with coal-miners but with those who were mining for metals). There were still some among those who knew that if you descend into the earth then you meet spiritual beings which you cannot meet on the surface of the earth. Then you meet the organs with which the earth dreams and thinks about the universal all. With those people thinking was still something which lived within the earth. They knew still that if you gaze up you see abstract stars, but if you get acquainted with what lives underneath the earth, then you see what you can call pictures - images which arise and which are truly living. Thus, at the end of the Kali Yuga, you lived in a hopelessly dead experience, from which you were starting to grow into something

which was more related to the realm of feeling (Empfindung). If we are able to do that, then we will slowly free ourselves from the shackles which time has fettered to the abstract man. Therefore I again and again have to point to what can unite you as young people in a very special intensive way. And this is that you say to yourself the following: Anthroposophy appeared among men who developed out of the godless thinking of their surrounding. These people met Anthroposophy, but for them Anthroposophy became something abstract. And so it happened that Anthroposophy was well understood by older people (though in an abstract way) round about the turning-point from the 19th century to the 20th century. They somehow understood Anthroposophy, and it is not just chance but a karmically necessary symptom that in the history of our Anthroposophical Movement there is a period when people were coming to us who in some way or other had been granted a pension, who had left the surrounding world and entered a pensioned existence. How would you feel, being responsible for Anthroposophy, if you had again and again to experience: as long as people stood in the professions of civilisation they said to themselves: "Yes, I may be of much use to Anthroposophy if I am not an Anthroposophist. I feel related to it, but I cannot be an Anthroposophist." - And thus they came only - and even then in a strange inward way - when they were pensioned. We have seen many people enter in this way - when they were pensioned. We have seen many people enter in this way and have experienced it as a kind of tragedy.

• Then there came the time when these older members should work actively, the time from the beginning of the 20th century. Then the very difficult time of the second decade of the 20th century, when the later-middle-aged should have been active, and this did not come about. The later-middle-aged failed. They could not find their way any more. They were somehow suspended between having passed their doctor's examination (and this could also happen with proletarians and with peasants) and the fact that they had not yet succeeded in getting their pension certificate. Out of Anthroposophy deeds would have come about.

Then the necessity arose to take up the question of the threefold order in the economic life, in life as such, where actually spirit-nature should have lived. And this would also have come about if the threefold social order had gripped the hearts - but it failed. One worked with human beings who were somehow suspended between their matriculation and pension certificates. This is the tragedy of those people, and it was impossible to come further. And now there exists this gap between those who are pensioned and those who did not value any longer such a matriculation certificate, who did not have any respect any more for these examinations but just took them as a matter of course, and who no longer took pride in them as people of the 70's and 60's of the last century had done. These people thought that one could not see man existing in his enspirited blood, but that one could have him hanging somewhere on the wall, framed as a certificate.

Such an attitude is no longer present, and I have often to think of an old friend when I meet the youth of today. He was already at the end of his fifties when I got to know him, and he had made his way in a small town. He was then 64 years old, and he somehow strangely bound up this old age with his youth. For when he was 18 he had fallen in love with a girl and got engaged to her, and now in his old age he wanted to marry her. But the church in which his birth registration was kept had been burned down, and so he could not get a birth certificate any more and had to renounce his marriage: for that was the time when one still had to be written down somewhere, and one had to show papers everywhere in order to prove that one existed. Because one did not consider the actual presence of a person: one was only concerned that it was somewhere written down that he existed. The youth now can no longer believe in the same way what stands in a doctor's diploma and in a matriculation certificate - what stands in any kind of certificate because they no longer believed that the one who had written it out really knew anything.

Then came the time when in the souls of these young people, and even particularly among the proletarians, a warm eager striving began. But at the same time this youth experienced a tremendous abyss which parted them from the older generation. This abyss exists in all those who at the beginning of the 20th century were between their 25th and 48th year. If one lived at the turn of the century in the period between one's 25th and 48th year, there was little chance to remain human. One just appeared human outwardly. The middle-aged had already created a kind of an abyss.

For the youth of today it is of no value when Anthroposophy is more and more transformed into abstractions, when it turns into ideas and concepts and even into new branches of science. For this youth wants to experience and live everything in deeds and in the true understanding of nature. One cannot stand still with what had already been handed over. This I would like to emphasize especially strongly: one said that one was forging the sword of Michael. But in the occult part of the world there remains as a fact that this sword of Michael which has to be prepared is carried, in the process of forging, to an altar which outwardly is invisible, which would have to lie underneath the earth; which really would have to lie underneath the earth.

To get to know the forces of nature beneath the earth; to get to know the working of the gods in nature - that leads to the understanding that the sword of Michael, in this process of forging, has to be carried to an altar which lies beneath the earth. There it has to be found by receptive souls. All depends on your help and contributing, that this sword of Michael is found by more and more souls. And it is not enough when it is found. You must have the strong but at the same time modest self-conviction as young people, that you are karmically called upon to carry the sword of Michael out into the world, to search for it and to find it. Then you will

have received what you are searching for in such gatherings as today's. Then you will also be able to recognise what I had to say to you about Anthroposophy, about all the difficulties which those people had who were between their doctor's examination and pension certificates. And you will recognise in an intensive imaginative way, so that the spirit of abstraction, this fearful Ahri-manic spirit, is not able to touch you too. Think in mighty pictures of the fact that two words have connected themselves with the striving of youth - words which in the nineteenth century were no longer understood. If one heard the word "Wandervogel" one had the feeling: does a well-travelled man actually know what in olden times that wandering has been, what the wanderer was who wandered in wind and weather? It is to this that we have to return. We must return to an imaginative experience of the soul. Does the man of today still know, in meeting the birds, what man had to go through, what Siegfried had to go through, in order to understand the language of the birds? This wander-bird Wotan-Siegfried. It is this which one has to understand in one's whole inner feeling experience. One has to find the way from the abstract conception of the wandervogel to Wotan, who lives and weaves in wind and weather, in clouds and waves of the organism of the earth, and one has to find the hidden language of the birds, which one has to become acquainted with in reviving from within the Siegfried-remembering and the Siegfried sword, which was only the prophetic prediction of the sword of Michael.

One has to find the way from the wanderer to Wotan, the way to the open heart, to believe again in the hidden language of the birds. You all can sense this path of the Wandervogel from Wotan to Siegfried, and if you can experience this deeply in your soul you will also find the possibility to experience and to know nature. And if you then still acquire the possibility even to dream a little, you will be able to live within the heavenly dreams of nature. That is something about which we at first should not think very much, but which we can just sense and permeate with our feeling. If you do this then you will form a community according to your heart. A community in which you step by step will find what you are searching for. Let us keep this alive in our consciousness. Let it fill our souls.