Speech of Cornelius Pietzner
at the Annual General Meeting of the General Anthroposophical Society Dornach, March 24, 2002

Dear Members of the Anthroposophical Society-
Dear Rolf Kerler, Arthur Zajonc

Thank you for your kind words of introduction. I am probably unfamiliar to many of you, as someone whose life and work has been based in America. Yet at the same time I would like to feel that where one strives to do the good in the world, with the aid of anthroposophy, one can feel united with others who have the same earnest goal, wherever one may find oneself, and whatever the circumstance may be. It is to "follow this good star" as Rudolf Steiner described on the last day of the Christmas Foundation meeting, and orient oneself to its light, that brings each one of us here, I am sure. It is with this conviction that I stand before you today, prepared and willing, if my nomination is accepted, to serve the Being of Anthroposophia and the Anthroposophical Society with all my strength and capability.

On sabbatical the year before last, I was able to journey around the world for several months. It was a special experience to encounter the vitality and dedication of those also oriented to "this good star" and working in different environments and conditions. From Sao Paolo to Peru to New Zealand and Australia one's soul is uplifted in the experience of a different kind of globalizing force, a humanizing and healing connection and identity that brings the spiritual life into relation with the earthly life in a contemporary and meaningful way. There is a great deal to appreciate in such a broad vista of the work, and one can experience the reality of what it means to be a worldwide Society, with coworkers spread around the world in a great and diverse network of common striving.

The periphery of the Society provides a kind of validation and life to the center, which in turn provides its own validation and identity back to the circumference in a great and unending dynamic movement. I am interested in this relationship of point and periphery, not only through my work as a curative educator for which Steiner has given the related well known meditation, but as a great principle and mystery of organization and of life altogether.

As someone who comes from one part of the circumference I hope to pay particular attention to supporting and developing, together with many others, the actual and specific forms and social realities that express and facilitate this mystery of the point and periphery in the life of the Anthroposophical Society. How do these forms function, and how are they redefined to meet ever-changing needs? One can easily see that being on the periphery can become the center of one's experience. This is a very common orientation! Yet we also experience the center, if we think of this as the Goetheanum, not only as a reflection and composite of the forces of the periphery but, as something in itself. Indeed, paradoxically we can experience they are one and the same! Yet what are the structures and methods that facilitate this movement between these two states or perceptions, and are they adequate for today?

I am also interested in such questions as I consider the finances and financial aspects of the Goetheanum. The budget expresses what lives as life activity, as initiative, intention, and forces of transformation arising from the work of the Society and Goetheanum. In this sense, making an analogy to the human being, the budget numbers work in some ways like the central ego.

On the other hand, the budget also reflects the Society's representative capacity of the worldwide movement. For example, the budget reflects estimations of our relationship to members and institutions throughout the world. As Christian Morgenstern said: "The world is another form of the ego". Just as in the human being there is a peripheral ego so too, one could also say, are the numbers a reflection of the life and will of the periphery of the Society – in other words, what comes towards us from the world. Steiner describes that the skeleton is the physical image of the Ego organization. Perhaps we can imagine the financial figures as a kind of "skeleton" of this central and peripheral Ego.

He further describes that the central and peripheral ego move respectively in a centrifugal and centripetal direction: out into the world, and from the out in the world to within, in two great and opposite movements. One force works from the inside out, the other from the outside to inside.

What do these opposite movements and reflections tell us? Which aspect is stronger, more stable

and where do we need to place emphasis and priority? How can the financial picture become a clear and transparent image of our intentions, activities and initiatives on the one side, (that is, what moves from the inside to the outside). And how can our performance and reputation – that is, how we are assessed from the outside or periphery- be reviewed with self-knowledge and openness? These are questions that I feel will be important for us to penetrate carefully in the next year or so, and develop appropriate responses based on our own understanding and perceptions and the involvement of many of our members and organizations.

It is both instructive and fascinating for me to slowly come to know the Goetheanum and the AAG through the lens of the budget, and income and expense statements, incomplete as that is! What questions reveal themselves? What indications, for example, about the work of the School of Spiritual Science are given through such a mirror – with some Sections heavily relying on the interest and support of friends and institutions around the world, and others being more "productive" in an income generating sense? On what basis do they exist financially and what is needed to give adequate support for further development? And what does the budget or income and expense statements say about the stage which is such a fundamental aspect of the cultural life of the Goetheanum? Or the general administration, or the members that so generously support the AAG from around the world? What are the patterns of support – overall, and in the different countries? All of these many relationships are reflected in the budget and financial statements, and one can slowly learn to build a diagnostic picture of needs, trends, priorities and health through them.

In this picture of inflowing and outflowing of finances we also experience the world aspect of the Society, the interest and commitment that supports and builds the work, and the initiatives and projects that require and draw in this interest. It is a deeply symbiotic process of the center and the circumference. The more transparent, conscious and responsive the forms and structures are that convey and carry this changing element of relationship, the stronger will this be reflected in the financial picture. I believe it is important to continue to make transparent and accessible the fiscal situation of the Society – also to the many members who have little or no idea how this aspect of the Goetheanum functions. I make the assumption that many members are interested and want to feel connected to the inflow and outflow of funds.

Finances concern everyone! They are not the exclusive province of the "finance experts" just as, for example, health and healing is not the private domain of doctors.

Today, everything imaginable is made into a "thing" or a commodity, and especially money. It is important to attempt, where possible, to "de-commodify" money back in the direction of living relationships and processes as much as possible. I feel we have an important task there, and need to engage in the larger economic and financial issues of our day. Even if our physical means and resources are extremely modest, we can be reminded of what Ralph Waldo Emerson, called "the arc of truth" – a trajectory that, when we hear or experience something that is true, we can then complete the arc ourselves with exactitude, even if we have not heard the full explanation or statement. The 'arc of truth' has its own natural trajectory. We can therefore take confidence in engaging in a search for meaning that leads us towards truth on the basis of spiritual science even in practical arenas such as finances and economy. In other words, ours can be a role of asking questions, probing assumptions, helping to loosen what Emerson called "the bondage of ideas" about how things must work in the larger society.

Thus, if my nomination is approved today, my commitment is to steward and manage as carefully and clearly as I am able the budget, finances and financial relationships that belong to the life of the Goetheanum and the AAG. I will need help to do this, not only from the excellent and dedicated financial coworkers who are already doing so much, but from many others who are also interested in the world of finances and wish to become more engaged and active. For in a very real sense these are relationships and issues that concern each one of us. I welcome collaboration.

Standing just beyond the threshold of a new century, and a little after 100 years since Steiner spoke publicly out of his own esoteric research, one can ask in what way is the Anthroposophical Society to understand and articulate the historical contribu-

tion that awaits us from the future. The larger impulses that are incumbent on the Society, worldwide, need to be expressed, discussed and debated. I believe it will important to develop a clear vision of a future for Anthroposophy and the Society that is created and contributed to by many people throughout the world.

There are three ongoing tasks that need to be strengthened that I would like to briefly mention. First we must continue to build diverse forms of relationships with confidence and integrity on a sound fundament of anthroposophy. Second, we must communicate our intentions and activities with imagination and consistency. Thirdly, the complexity of unfolding, even having, a truly world society, with all its dimensions, layers, issues and various concerns needs constant innovation and alertness. These three responsibilities are incumbent on the Collegium of the School of Spiritual Science and are areas that I feel I would like to support.

I believe it can only be a valuable effort to try and deepen the sense of recognition of a spiritual home at the Goetheanum-- not only for the people who are accustomed to being here, but for the many who come perhaps for the first time from far away and with great effort and sacrifice. My own experience tells me that one important way to encourage this for others is to understand that those who come to live and work here, especially those in a representative capacity are, actually, only trustees, though trustees in the highest sense of the word. We are trustees of a continuing spiritual legacy from Rudolf Steiner that has increasing potential and strength for both the present and the future. We are entrusted to strengthen, protect and express the contemporary spiritual reality of Anthroposophia. This means to practice leadership principally as a servant, and to serve this impulse in its esoteric integrity and to serve this impulse in its manifold expression. Leadership is first and foremost a service , as it is practiced presently in the Vorstand. This is a practical principle that I also feel committed to support.

This is my second commitment- to serve to the best of my ability, to listen and learn from the wisdom and insights that live throughout the Society, so that the Goetheanum, and the work that it is to do and to represent, resonates deeply within the hearts and souls of those who seek it and the light of "this good star" of the Being of Anthroposophia can be allowed to guide us.

Allow me to conclude on a more personal note. Although I have middle European family roots, I am aware that I approach this new task as someone very much formed from the west. I am honored to have been asked to take up these responsibilities on the Vorstand, and have the hope that what I can offer can fructify the work and perhaps bring some different approaches and perspectives. At the same time I appreciate and recognize the fact that it will be an enormous benefit to me to learn from what lives and has been cultivated so thoroughly in the heart of Europe. As a longstanding member recently said to me in Norway: "Is it not just our task to transform the gulf of strangeness, of the 'otherness' in their being, their utterances, their manner and way, into a fount of new understanding and possibility? I welcome this point of view and the particular opportunity of new understanding and growth as a central cosmopolitan characteristic of the Time Spirit Michael.

I still wish to acknowledge the tremendous work and service that Rolf Kerler has given so admirably to the Goetheanum and Society. With modesty and care Rolf Kerler has guided the finances in a manner that is inspiring and sets a very high standard indeed. I am pleased that he will remain in this area, for his counsel and experience will be of continuing value and help. Of course, he has been very well aided by Markus Jermann who has also devoted his whole being to the Goetheanum over the last decade with exemplary dedication and skill. I thank them both for this outstanding service.

I'd also like to thank my wife, Elisabeth and daughter, who have supported me in this decision. Due respectively to university and work considerations, however, they will still reside in the United States for some time.

Lastly, it gives me great joy to think of coworking with so many thoughtful people who have taken on different tasks at the Goetheanum. As I begin to spend more time at the Goetheanum it becomes clear that there is a highly creative grouping of individuals gathered here that, together, through their talent, and dedication, give eloquent testimony to the life of anthroposophy.

Thank you
Cornelius M. Pietzner