

# The new spatial concept part 3, **A closer look at the Goetheanum buildings**

(translation from January 2025. For the figures, see the original article)

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In the third part of our observations, we look at the first and second Goetheanum. Although they are very different buildings in their appearance, they both have the same coordinate axis, the same size and the same relationship between the hall and the stage allows the plans to be superimposed, as Mr. Rex Raab has so uniquely demonstrated in his book '*Sprechender Beton*')<sup>1</sup>. And all these elements are of a spatial nature; thus the spatial arrangement of the two buildings is the same (fig. 1).

If the outbuildings in part 2 of our observations revealed a formal language related to the new spatial concept, a similar formal language can be found in the exterior design of the second Goetheanum. This can be observed if we consider the six adjoining buildings in their respective directions in relation to the exterior design of the second Goetheanum.

If one looks from the outbuildings in the east and west of the site towards the second Goetheanum, it becomes immediately apparent how the Luciferian forces of will clearly unfold at the front in the west of the building and the Ahrimanic forces in the east.

In Rudolf Steiner's model for the second Goetheanum, this front-back polarity is even more clearly visible than in the actual building. The posterior part was considerably lower than the anterior part, so that the polarity between the Ahrimanic, with its forces pulling towards the earth, and the Luciferic, with its forces tending more towards the heavens, was made even more clearly visible (fig. 2).

However, amendments were prompted by the authorities. Reasons of taste based on harmony and an exterior sense of balance evidently played a role here. As a result, in comparison with Rudolf Steiner's model, it must unfortunately be said that the finished building will always have an obscuring element to it.

We can see, for example, how the roof design of the second Goetheanum on the west side closely resembles what Rudolf Steiner had already designed as a kind of developmental step for the roofs of Duldeck House and the Eurythmeum.

As with these two buildings, this roof also arches beyond the boundaries of the walls, and here too, as with the Eurythmeum, we find pillars which are necessary to make this dynamic movement architecturally possible (fig. 3). Luciferian forces of will are used here to make the function visible, together with Luciferian emotional forces. Both Goetheanum buildings were created at the request of the members for the performance of the Mystery Dramas. While the buildings combine many functions, the dominant main function of both buildings is that of a theater. For a theater as a type of building for cultural life, a more Luciferian design intent is generally justified.

You can experience this function when you surrender yourself to the dynamics of the theater, feeling, willing and thinking. You can then feel how an artistic and human event flows from the stage into the auditorium and into the sensitive, open minds of the audience. The design of the second Goetheanum is already modeled on the function translated into movement.

So the second Goetheanum displays a great correspondence with the found aspects of the polarities. There is a strict symmetry between left and right, as in the human body. This is already one of the foundations of the mutual understanding between this building and the human being encountering it.

In our investigations into the terrain and the outbuildings, we found functional differences in the left and right. These differences in the terrain, as simple as they were and yet so fundamental in terms of their function in relation to people, were those on the right and left between working and relaxing, and this resulted in the difference between functional and residential buildings.

Traces of these functional differences can be found, if you will, to a certain extent in some of the functions that exist in the ground floor of the second Goetheanum. They can be seen in the differences in function between the bookshop on the north side (Ahrimanic book printing) and the gallery on the south side (Luciferian enjoyment of coffee and chocolate).

Likewise, the theater box office on the front north side and the information desk on the front south side are opposite each other on the right and left. If you look at this even more deeply and consider, for example, that there is actually a cash register in all four of these functions, that is the ahrimanic function that is established like a core in each of these four rooms; that of the northern cash register, the theater

cash register and that of the bookshop in comparison to the southern cash registers, which take in at least ten times larger sums of money (fig. 4).

### **Architrave plane**

If thinking is established in the right-left and the volitional impulses in the front-back, then feeling is established in the top-bottom. With the latter, one simultaneously enters the artistic element. And it is not surprising if, as here with Rudolf Steiner, where there is a building impulse that consciously remains so close to the human being himself, one arrives architecturally at symmetry, thereby giving the building a direction with one's volitional process in order to immerse oneself in the artistic in a third phase of the building process.

In architecture, this artistic aspect can unfold particularly well in the bottom-top plane, as this is the spatial direction of feeling. For Rudolf Steiner, this means consistently giving artistic expression to certain world forces that are at work in architecture, namely those of carrying and bearing weight (fig. 5). Therefore, in his buildings, both inside and outside, the architrave planes are, by law, the areas where the artistic element appears to be used most strongly. For example, to concentrate first on the second Goetheanum, in its truly complicated roof design.

A thorough examination of the roof reveals a threefold structure. A flat and strongly shaped roof extends along the longitudinal axis as a volitional axis from the back to the front, where it stops over the western wall of the hall. Seen from the front, it forms a strong frontal gesture. A 'second roof' lies over it, coming from the side wings towards the center of the axial plane. This roof brings the left and right sides together. A 'third roof' rises more from below and is formed by the conflicting forces in the architrave area. It is this roof that forms a protective gesture over the vividly elaborated western staircase.

Overall, we find a roof composed of three differentiated movements: the first, unfolding from bottom to top in expansion, the second advancing from back to front as if from a strong impulse of force, and the third roof, which spreads out above in a protective movement that brings the left and the right together in the middle (fig. 6).

The roofs represent the three directions of space: desire expressed in a willpower that unfolds from back to front, thinking in bringing together the forces of left and right and feeling in a bottom-top dynamic. One can suddenly recognize how this configuration corresponds to the forces of

the bull, the eagle and the lion. The lion straightens up, the bull strives forward, the eagle unfolds its wings to the left and right )<sup>2</sup>.

### **From the geometrical to the organic-sculptural**

In the first Goetheanum, the architrave level also formed the starting point for the development of artistic design. The first Goetheanum was an interior building in the true sense of the word; Rudolf Steiner had not yet consciously planned the exterior design; the building impulse came from within, the intention was to create an interior space. Only the concrete appearance of the double-domed shape of the first Goetheanum in the Dornach landscape must have given Rudolf Steiner a new perspective as an architect.

Although he saw geometry as an important element in architecture, it was to be transformed into a more sculptural, organic style, which, as the shape of the second Goetheanum shows, was much more in harmony with the surrounding landscape structure.

The Glass House is still very much in this geometrically dominated early phase, while the Heating House becomes a bridge from geometric to organic sculptural architecture. Nevertheless, the geometric beginnings are important for demonstrating Rudolf Steiner's fundamental ideas.

### **The idea of the double-circle**

The double-circle construction as the basic plan for the first Goetheanum (fig. 7) is the geometric expression of a balance between polarities, between the poles of one and two, between monism and dualism. It also represents the two-in-one, Rudolf Steiner's dialectical monism of his philosophy of freedom, which later emerged as man's striving for balance between the forces of the two opposing powers, between Lucifer and Ahriman )<sup>3</sup>.

If the two circles were pushed into one another, then one circle would emerge, i.e. the shape of the domed building, like the Pantheon in Rome. In the theater, the audience and the performers became one, the figure and the aspiration of Lucifer. Philosophically, one would have monism )<sup>4</sup>. But if the two circles were drawn apart, creating two separate circles, then in a theater the auditorium and the stage would no longer be connected. You would have Ahriman's number, two, in front of you and philosophically dualism. This reveals a form of theater that one should actually consider impossible, were it not for the fact that technical developments have already multiplied it to infinity worldwide in the electrical machinery of mass communication, where in the cinema and on television an Ahrimanic technology 'apparently' connects the

auditorium and the stage to form Ahriman's theater, where most people sit.

The double-circle shape therefore represents a balance between Luciferian and Ahrimanic endeavors. In this double-circle idea, we find the idea of space already represented in the front-back and in the left-right symmetry around a central axis.

The basic plan of the first Goetheanum also shows what has a relationship to the idea of space. If, for example, one assumes two circles of equal size that penetrate each other, then on the one hand, where the front is defined, one of these circles, as the Luciferian circle, should necessarily expand a little according to the law, and on the other hand, the second circle, where the back is defined, should contract a little. This creates this specific double-circle shape in the ground plan of the first Goetheanum.

### **Always question what is happening**

This allocation, hall under Luciferic influence and stage under Ahrimanic influence, can be pursued further. If you delve into the function, you can follow Rudolf Steiner very well, who put it simply: 'Always question what is happening?' So, what is really going on here?

The audience sits in a theater hall, as comfortably as possible. The audience is outwardly motionless during the performance. The audience, that is many individual people together, but in the theater together they react as a unit. Of course, one could say that there are many differently reacting individuals in the auditorium, but it could also be argued that people's inner psychological experiences are largely synchronized by the events and goings-on on stage.

One has a unifying experience. This is noticeable during the intermissions, when many people want to echo what they have experienced in the others in a lively exchange. It is as if at such moments you want to hear that you have experienced something in common. Unity is formed when you realize that everyone has come to play the same game. And when the piece is successful, the audience enjoys it and lets it show. From this calm, this synchronized and concentrated unity of the audience, this unity in the functioning of all spectators and from the enjoyment itself as a spiritual element, one can already sense the Luciferian dominance in the life of the auditorium.

This dominance becomes even more emphasized, more contoured, when one turns to the events and experiences on stage and asks

oneself: "What is happening there, what is working there in concrete terms?".

Without the audience actually realizing it, a very busy crew is at work in front of and behind the scenes. Technical equipment is being operated, costumes and decorations are being changed, lighting is being altered, performers are being dressed and preparing for their roles. Money is earned. So everything that happens can be seen as a business. And the play could not be staged if there hadn't been so much preparation, if the director hadn't had to study and rehearse so much with his performers. And this rehearsing really is sometimes repetition, repetition again and again until the play is right and ready to be performed. And every evening is actually a repetition of the same piece for a different audience.

When you respond to the question "What is happening, what is working?", you experience a real labor situation, and this is how the ahrimanic style of the stage area is described. In today's Goetheanum you can see how the more artistically designed new hall, where you can experience a lot of beautiful forms and colors, and the 'technical stage', which is already so implied in the linguistic usage, diverge even more today (fig. 8).

A new equilibrium situation to be built is still something in the future. For the time being, the ahrimanic technique is quite predominant in today's stage area.

### **The first Goetheanum in the quadrants**

The double-circle idea then became the ground plan of the first Goetheanum. The inscription in this plan of four quadrants with the zones of influence of Luciferic and Ahrimanic thinking forces to the left and right, and the zones of Luciferic and Ahrimanic volitional forces to the front and back, gives us an insight into the spatial structure. When Rudolf Steiner stated that he could solve the tasks of design step by step during the building process, it had to do with this idea of space (fig. 9).

The polarities of the Luciferian and the Ahrimanic can be seen very clearly in the rows of pillars in the first Goetheanum. The ones in the hall are the best known, those in the small domed room the great unknowns, at the same time again a sub-polarity, one could say, between the revealed and the secret.

One particular aspect through which Rudolf Steiner assigns certain zones and areas of influence to Luciferian or Ahrimanic forces is the

numerical aspect. We have already seen how Lucifer is connected with the number one and Ahriman with the number two.

Observation of the window openings and the like in the eurythmy houses has drawn our attention to the fact that we may assume in this direction that Rudolf Steiner assigns the odd numbers to Lucifer and the even numbers to Ahriman. The numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, etc. are the numbers dominated by Lucifer, the numbers 2, 4, 6, 8, etc. are the numbers dominated by Ahriman.

This results in 2 x 7 pillars in the hall versus 2 x 6 in the small domed room; the pillar shafts in the hall are made of one type of wood, the pillars in the small domed room are each made of two different types of wood )<sup>5</sup>.

The columns in the small dome are clearly the thinner ones in terms of height/cross-section, showing a tendency to contract. In the hall, the columns are set on pedestals, emphasizing the upward direction, but not in the small domed room. In the small domed room, the columns stand directly on the floor, and the two-part structure can be seen again in the thrones that have been added (fig. 10).

These thrones show a thoroughly Ahrimanic expression in that each throne emphasizes the number two and also in two groups of three thrones, low and high. The design of these thrones is quite angular; they have something frightening about them. You can also see in courses that the bases of the hall columns are often plasticized, but no course instructor dares to plasticize the thrones. These remain mysterious, in the darkness of consciousness )<sup>6</sup>.

The numerical aspect is also expressed in many other ways in this building, e.g. in the pentagonal shape of the columns, the seven-part capitals and the arrangement of the motifs in the dome painting. The sculpture of the group in the small domed room also appears twice, once as a sculpture and once as a painting.

Rudolf Steiner took very specific account of duality in the color treatment of the paintings in the small dome. It was painted in layers with two colors, while in the large dome room it was painted with one layer of primary colors, but the motifs themselves were also painted twice, to the left and to the right. Rudolf Steiner then specified that the motifs on the south side should be reflected on the north side in the opposite colors. In this way, the dome painting was clearly intended to be divided into two halves.

Even if one distinguishes between the paintings in the large and small domes according to their content, one sees in the large dome the truly great epochs of the origins of mankind, in the small dome the much more limited and less distant cultural epochs, and these are then drawn together even more (Ahrimanic direction of movement) down to representatives of those epochs. In other words, the far-reaching stands in contrast to the more contracted overview )<sup>7</sup>.

### **West-east axis**

Steiner's sculpture - known as „Die Gruppe“ - the group, was then to stand centrally at the end of the west-east axis of this building, essentially as the summary of the whole building )<sup>8</sup>. The building concept has been realized to its core. The theme of the building was to keep the balance in the middle between the forces of Lucifer and Ahriman. Steiner consistently wanted this to be the beginning of a new cultural impulse in this building, in order to use the knowledge of this balance to make an attempt pointing to the future, in order to permeate the whole of inner and outer life from this impulse of balance.

The group was thus an expression of the idea of building, as a summarizing core )<sup>9</sup>. The design of the terrain is then the area where the building idea, lured out by Luciferian impulses, radiates the striving for balance into the closer and wider surroundings of the building. Thus balance appears on three levels on site )<sup>10</sup>.

This can be seen in the motif for the building that was sculpted around the red window in the west. A movement leads from this motif into the interior of the building along the central axis. It also crowns the stage portal, but here we only find the round elements broadly extended. Then, in the final stage, we find only the barren straight lines of this motif, the skeleton of the motif, shrunk together above the group. Here, too, we notice this inner consistency (fig. 11).

### **Exterior**

Finally, a few interesting observations can be made about the exterior of the first Goetheanum from the point of view of the concept of space. Firstly, there is the relationship between the rear part and the front part. For the western part, with its more Luciferian emphasis, appears to us to be raised on a plateau, while the rear part stands directly on the ground, as we have just seen from the differences in the pillar inside the building. Next, the two-part structure should be noted, the small dome space itself and a conversion for the supporting functions.



Finally, the west façade should be compared with the east façade, a major difference. The east façade is hardly known, but there is this very narrow high door, which is also very visibly made up of two doors, and note the final gesture at the top, where the two-part aspect is again actively used (fig. 12); and then again in comparison with the west façade.

### **The lectern as the center**

We have seen how the sun makes a full circle around the building in its day and night rhythm, following a path of light to the left, upwards and forwards, and a path of darkness to the right, downwards and backwards. The colors are created between light and darkness. When the ahrimanic artificial light shines in the small dome, the sun shines through the colored windows in the hall. In a rear-front polarity: Ahrimanic artificial light from inside, polar opposite the sunlight from outside.

If you then follow the motifs of these windows in a left-right relationship, you will discover the Luciferian motifs in the south, dominantly illuminated by the sunlight, and the Ahrimanic motifs in the north, illuminated by the weaker and cooler light from that direction. Everything resonates together in this architectural idea, which is based on a strong idea of space )<sup>11</sup>.

Rudolf Steiner was able to solve the design tasks involved in building the first Goetheanum step by step. For all these steps were somehow situated in space and thus within the laws of spatial thinking. This also applies to the central point of the building in this “House of the Word”: the lectern (fig. 13).

You can see how he made the one and the two visible at the same time in a design. Whoever speaks there stands concretely in the middle between the two forces.

The word that was spoken from anthroposophy radiates outwards from this particular center point through the entire building in all its details, radiating into the surrounding area, into the geographical surroundings, into the wider world. And so it becomes: In the beginning was the word.

### **Notes:**

)<sup>1</sup> Rex Raab, Arne Klingborg, Ake Fant, *Sprechender Beton*, Verlag am Goetheanum 1972, pp. 60, 61, figs. 42 - 45

)<sup>2</sup> Manfred Ziegler came to the same conclusion in his essay in Stil, Michaëli 1993/94 -XV - 3, *Merkurstab, Viergetier und Goetheanum*. From a completely different perspective he also sees the four-animal appearing in the form of the second Goetheanum.

)<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Kunst im Lichte der Mysterienweisheit*, GA 275 p. 152, lecture January 4, 1915

)<sup>4</sup> See Carl Kemper, *Der Bau, Studien zur Architektur und Plastik des ersten Goetheanum*, Freies Geistesleben, Stuttgart 1966, p. 104

)<sup>5</sup> See )<sup>4</sup> p. 106

)<sup>6</sup> See )<sup>4</sup> e.g. illustration p. 103

)<sup>7</sup> See Hilde Raske - *Das Farbenwort*, Stuttgart 1983

)<sup>8</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Architektur, Plastik und Malerei des Ersten Goetheanum*, GA 288, p. 38, lecture January 24, 1920: "...the whole building is this central group in all its parts in a certain way, so that this central group can in turn be understood as a synthetic summary of the whole building,..."

)<sup>9</sup> Piet Sieperda, *Der Gruppe und der neue Raumgedanke*, in STIL, 1/1995

)<sup>10</sup> Piet Sieperda, *Der Raumgedanke*, in STIL 1/1994 u. *Nähere Betrachtungen des Goetheanum-Geländes*, in STIL 1/2001

)<sup>11</sup> See )<sup>7</sup> p. 229.