

Hellmuth Finsterlin

Valentin Tomberg and His Opponents

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Dependence on the Vastly Superior Ability of a Spiritual Teacher

Upon my arrival at the Waldorf school in 1926 as a ten-year-old lad, I was struck by the lack of self reliance in my teacher. Everything that teacher knew, she owed to Rudolf Steiner, literally everything. His name was heard countless times daily. The child that I was reacted with hostility. Angered, I shook my fist more than once at his portrait hanging in the classroom. Such behavior was certainly not the rule among the students. That my classmates accepted such dependence unquestioningly did nothing to mitigate my distaste for it. I now understand what I couldn't as a child--Rudolf Steiner's human achievements lofted almost unattainably above us – he was as much at home on earth as "in heaven" – so universal in his knowledge that no one knew fear in the shade of his authority. He certainly far surpassed what was ordinarily considered outstanding. We who were born later can scarcely bring that before our spiritual eyes livingly enough. How enrapt the friends and associates of Rudolf Steiner were can perhaps be relived if one reads in *Marie Steiner, Letters and Documents* what she wrote about Valentin Tomberg to a Miss von Dumpff and what she appended, undated, around 1936 (pages 323 ff.). If one compares the [previously] quoted preface to Tomberg's *Anthroposophical Studies [on the Old Testament]* with what Ms. Steiner believed herself able to read between its lines, one can see what the mood among the friends was and how time sensitive much that's been committed to writing is. Such a comparison really provides an important key!

It is remarkable that Ms. Steiner, whose conduct in such other matters as her husband's literary estate seems objectively not only understandable but justified and necessary, attributed Tomberg's alleged failure to his family life at the time. One need not trot out Rudolf Steiner for authority that love affairs can disturb spiritual work. Was Tomberg's relationship with his second wife such, however, that his objectivity was necessarily impaired? How could Ms. Steiner in Dornach know the condition of Tomberg's soul in Tallinn? She knew that from his ex wife. She was an old friend of Ms. Steiner and was staying in Dornach. That she could furnish no cogent account is manifest. She depicted Tomberg's relationships as though Byelozhvyetov tolerated: an involvement between Tomberg and his wife, as though a romantic triangle existed. She was obviously unaware, however, that Byelozhvyetov was already engaged to a young woman and that he and his wife had mutually chosen divorce. We are digging here into things that belong exclusively to private life (I acquired the information about the Byelozhvyetovs' relationship from their daughter, who lived in Aachen).

One cannot value highly enough Marie Steiner's service to anthroposophy, particularly as regards the preservation of Rudolf Steiner's legacy. On the other hand, however, she has slowed anthroposophy's spread among open-minded men and women and encouraged – unwittingly – Rudolf Steiner's installation as an infallible pope in Dornach.

Herbert Wimbauer's Criticism of Tomberg

Similarly unjust [his views on Oriphiel were just discussed] is Wimbauer's treatment of Valentin Tomberg, "an occultist who defected from Rudolf Steiner". Tomberg indeed became a Catholic but did not intend thereby to defect from Rudolf Steiner. Also, the assertion that Tomberg "followers" (are there many?) swallowed his alleged "bodhisattvahood" as well as his reference to circles of Tomberg followers "here and there" (where?) is mere rumor mongering. It's true that Willy Seil, who considers himself an occultist, made the claim that Tomberg is an incarnation of the bodhisattva. His student Hermann Keimeyer, who has nothing more to learn about Rudolf Steiner, popularized it. That is not to say, however, that, beyond those two, anyone else believed in Tomberg's bodhisattvahood (a comical construction). How one can recognize the bodhisattva was amply detailed by Rudolf Steiner in *From Jesus to Christ* (G. 131). The details there in no way fit Tomberg.

Wimbauer criticizes with some justification certain events and attitudes within the anthroposophical movement. It would be better if he said less and expressed himself more clearly, because he often accuses wildly and risks having his attacks seem targeted at unintended victims.