

THE BEGINNINGS OF IASPES

A Speech by Mette Lebech

I am very honoured and glad to have been given life membership of IASPES for services as its founding president.

IASPES had three founding initiators: Haydn Gurmin as founding secretary, Liz Meade as founding treasurer and myself as founding president. Although the idea was probably mine, the momentum built was shared.

Preceding the launch of the association in early June 2009 (we are thus celebrating the 10th anniversary of IASPES this year); Haydn Gurmin had helped identify contact details for as many Stein scholars as we knew of. There was an emphasis on the United States as I was planning to travel there during a sabbatical 2009-10, to make contact with as many of these as was practical, and reinforce links between them. During my visit, I stayed with Sarah Borden-Sharkey and Marianne Sawicki, and visited the Stein archives in Spalding University (established by Mary Catherine Baseheart) as well as the house of ICS Publications in Washington.

As the rest of the sabbatical year was spent in Dresden with Hannah-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz and her team, the cross-Atlantic contacts were brought into the life stream of European Stein studies and critical mass was reached for an association concentrating on Stein's philosophical contributions.

The first website (quickly hacked) was constructed by Haydn Gurmin and then reconstructed with the professional help of Maura O'Donnell. Later also Rosemarie Lucero and Robert McNamara played key roles in its development.

The first International Conference was held in Maynooth, Ireland in July 2011. Here Liz and Haydn were marvellous collaborators in that everything that presented itself as having to be done – from writing constitutions to accepting membership subscriptions – was assumed in a generous spirit. The buzz was fantastic and made it clear that IASPES had a future. The new committee, now leaving office, with Antonio Calcagno at the helm, has made that future happen. As much should be evident from the marvellously diverse and colourful programme of this conference organised by Harm Klueping ten years later.

I am delighted to see that IASPES is now 10 years old! Long may it live to promote the study of the philosophy of Edith Stein!