

## Report and Minutes of the meeting of the Hague Circle - International Council of Steiner Waldorf Education – in Budapest, Hungary, 29<sup>th</sup> May – 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025

### Members in attendance

*William Bester, Sigurd Borghs, Raquel Cestari, Christopher Clouder, Claire Defèche, Zsolt Galsai, Nana Goebel, Stefan Grosser, Rieko Hata, Constanza Kaliks, Henning Kullak-Ublick, Cristina Laffi, Trevor Mephram, Maria Norberg, Irina Ogorodova, Porn Panosot, Elard Pijnaken, Dusan Plestil, Dorothee Prange, Melanie Reiser, Philipp Reubke, Helena Sandell, Branka Strmole-Ukmar, Michal Ben Shalom, Robert Thomas, Lourdes Tormes, Cristina Vilhelmsen, Leonhard Weiss, Christof Wiechert, Tomáš Zdražil (30)*

**Apologies** – *Marta Florencio, Tamara Henke, Chih Hung, Andrew Hill, Gopa Malaker, Casmir Masigwa, Olen Mezentseva, Vanessa Pohl, Mary Tait, Mario Veira, Chih-Hung Wang, Linda Williams, Josefin Winther, Michael Zech, Li Zewu (15)*

### Documents included with the minutes:

- a) reports from USA and Korea
- b) *Essential Characteristics of / Guidelines for Waldorf Education (30<sup>th</sup> May, Budapest)*
- c) *Recommendations for the Development of a National Association for Steiner Waldorf Education (30<sup>th</sup> May, Budapest)*
- d) Organogram presented by Hungarian colleagues
- e) Article from Christian Boettger
- f) Poems & Verse from Budapest

**Welcome** - *Zsolt Galsai* welcomed us to Hungary and to the school – the *Pestihidegkut* Waldorf School – on the outskirts of Budapest.

The school opened in September 1989, following the tumbling of the Berlin Wall. It was the first Waldorf school to open in Hungary. As such, it was the pioneer school. Prior to opening, anthroposophy was practised ‘underground’ in apartments, while in Austria, one Hungarian lady attended a eurythmy studium, while a small group of young teachers were training in Stuttgart. Between the wars, educational activity had taken place in a villa, but was shut down in 1936, and activities ceased for 50+ years.

The very first beginnings, a kindergarten opened, led by *Anette Stroteich* from Germany. A school then began in Solymar. There was one trained teacher, and one ‘in training’ in Vienna. At the beginning, one class opened, with an active group of

parents, in a priest's house. In the second year, the school operated in a 'cultural house', and in the third year, the school obtained its first building, while Zsolt began as a pupil at the school. In 1995, the school settled in its present site. Today, there are three school buildings, with scope for more. In the schoolyear 1995-96, six class 5s participated in the first 'Olympics'. Now, three Olympiads are held each year, to accommodate the 800+ class 5 students in Hungary. In 2001, the first class finished its journey through the school. Now this is a KG - Class 13 school with numbers around 30 per class.

*Melanie Reiser* (USA) presented a solemn and disturbing report covering some of the key elements and characteristics of life in the USA, after 4 months of the second Trump administration. She shared a written report (attached), co-written with Linda Williams who was not present at the meeting.

*Zsolt* then gave an overview of life and challenge in Hungary, focusing on an historical-social perspective.

There are some similarities with Trump's USA, but also great differences, with Hungary at the heart of central European history for over 1000 years. Circa 1000 CE, Stephen was crowned as the first king. One fundamental question was posed: From where does the crown come? This was primarily a religious question, since in the west of Europe the crown was acquired via the Pope in Rome. Pope Sylvester II sent the crown to Stephen - *Szent István király*.

Hungary sometimes describes itself as a 'ferry' country, between the east and west of Europe. It has the potential to be a 'bridge', although frequently it is on one bank of the river, or the other.

In 1291, the kingdom was subject to an invasion by the Mongols. After two years of destruction and mayhem, the Mongol invaders suddenly retreated. In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the kingdom grew and extended into what is today called Croatia and Slovakia. By 1541, a tripartite arrangement was installed, comprising the Habsburg Empire, the 'central region', and Transylvania. In a form of confederation, the parts of the kingdom were 'united' and separate. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Habsburg Empire instigated some unsuccessful wars, and by 1867, the Hungarian found itself inside the Austrian Empire, yet with some 'Habsburg' ministries exercising devolved powers.

At the conclusion of hostilities in the 'Great War' (1914-18), at the signing of the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary lost 72% of its land. By 1920, 1/3 of the land remained Hungarian, with Hungarian minorities in several surrounding countries. This remains the case today. In the 1930s a pact was made with the National Socialist government in German, in the hope that some land might be reacquired. Revisionism reared its head which led to antisemitism and anti-Romani sentiment. The inter-war period witnessed some positive changes in education, with new schools and new approaches. However,

by 1948, with the advance of Soviet socialism to 'eastern' Europe, independent political, social, economic and cultural activity was frozen.

Today, the old tendencies towards authoritarianism and intolerance are on the rise again, including antisemitism and reactionary rule. Between 1990 and 2000, a new system seemed to flourish with a decade of economic and social progress. In round 1 of EU enlargement, just three countries were admitted as new members, with Hungary taking one of the places. Between 2000 and 2010, there was a slowing of democratic progress, and Hungary went into decline. Having been a young, liberal-leaning politician in 1989, Viktor Orbán served as prime minister between 1998 and 2002.

And from 2010 to the present day, Orban has been in office, at the head of the Fidesz Party. Orban has turned sharply to the right. As a result of electoral changes, in 2010, Fidesz won two thirds of the parliamentary seats. Changes to the constitution have been brought in, along with a hefty dose of historical revisionism. Generally-speaking, the demographics point to liberal, progressive city populations and a conservative countryside. The electoral changes gave the countryside a sizeable majority and the country is now run like a one-party state, with Hungarian society split in two in, what is currently, a benign dictatorship. Those with money have been strengthened into a class of oligarchs. Orban's best friend happens to be the richest man in Hungary. He bought large chunks of the 'independent' media and closed it down the next day. Orban's son-in-law is also a very wealthy person, yet Orban himself supposedly owns just one apartment. An avid footballer when a young man, Orban's boyhood team is now flooded with public money and narrowly lost out in becoming national champions this year. The stadium has an organic design; the stadium – the *Pancho Arena* – almost rubs up against Orban's boyhood home.

Currently, the political opposition is building, even though they have not articulated a programme. A new era may beckon, with elections next year. Consequently, a series of oppressive laws are being proposed and passed to shut down the voices of opponents. The widespread banning of dissenting opinions is on the way, and any foreign donations will be outlawed.

In the meantime, the education system narrows. The state is issuing a standard set of 'conservative' curriculum resources. These materials are dated and restrictive.

Currently, Waldorf schools receive partial state support (approximately 50%). There have been many times when alternative schools could have been closed down. In important ways, Waldorf schools have a charmed existence.

A central question and a challenge for people right now is: How to talk about democracy? How to be a conscious citizen, and responsible for the place where you live? Sometimes it seems that people are somewhat supine, sitting and waiting for change to happen. Dangers lurk for the Waldorf schools in this moment. The schools

and the students feel this mood. In the public domain, teachers are sacked from time to time for their political views. Some students from the school at *Pestihidegkut* have taken part in protests and demonstrations. Two years ago, Waldorf students took part in an action to split the city of Budapest in two by means of a chain.

#### **Verse – Robert**

In April 24, Steiner gave a course of six lectures (GA 308), in which he outlined the prospect whereby initiation becomes a principle of civilisation. The lectures were given in Stuttgart, to an audience of 1,700 people. At the close of the lectures, Steiner spoke this verse. One week later, in Bern, Steiner gave five lectures on education (GA 309). At the end, following a description of a path of knowledge, as part of a discourse on life-long education, Steiner spoke this verse again. Over the weekend, the verse was spoken in seven languages – Czech, English, French, German, Hungarian, Japanese and Spanish.

#### **Remembering Rudolf Steiner – Tomáš Zdražil**

Thinking of Steiner 100 years after his death, *Tomáš* offered three perspectives.

In the fifth year of the school's life, in March 1923, Steiner introduced *Martha Haebler* to the staff. She was 26 years old and had just graduated from university. The school had just closed for the holidays, and an education conference was underway. On greeting her, Steiner said, "Well, I was expecting a man, but you will be able to play your part." At that time there were two class 4s, each with 50 pupils. It was decided to divide the group of 100 pupils into three classes and Steiner chose the children for *Martha Haebler's* Class 5.

Something like 100 teachers were present in a brand-new school building. Steiner commented that it had been a good conference, although he was disappointed that the anthroposophical content had been forgotten. He criticised two colleagues – *Stein* and *Hahn* – for being rather negative and not showing enough enthusiasm. A colleague – *Violetta Plincke* – suddenly appeared at the school, after many bouts of illness. Steiner had lost trust in her and she was dismissed from the staff.

Steiner accompanied Martha into class, telling the children that it wasn't nice to be packed like sardines in the room, and that he had found a wonderful teacher for the children. She began her teaching work as a language specialist, and used the word, 'accent'. Steiner asked her if she knew where the word came from and proceed to offer an explanation. Martha recorded this incident in her journal. She held beautiful memories of Rudolf Steiner – his dress and his conduct. She was overwhelmed by his work-rate, which was sometimes 24 hours on the trot. Despite this phenomenal workload, Haebler wrote that Steiner never gave an impression of stress or fatigue. He was always very calm, good humoured and relaxed. He was a living example of that which he spoke about; his words and actions converged perfectly. At times, he

mentioned an educational book for the whole of humankind – *Knowledge of Higher Worlds – How is it achieved?*

Tomaš then spoke about the difficulty and struggle for Steiner's work to find a place in the public discourse. With the centenary celebrations in 2019, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* carried an opinion piece, which described the growth and development of the schools in 'pastel colours'. The article reported that while Waldorf schools are flourishing, they need to 'move on' from the founder, Rudolf Steiner. Between 2019 and 2022, there was a certain focus on depicting Steiner as a strange person with weird ideas, possibly unwell.

Coming to the present – the centenary of Steiner's death – 80-90% of publications in Germany and Switzerland took a critical perspective. However, there were a couple of titles published that were positive and heartening. Christian Rittelmeyer, a well-known psychologist, published a book called: *Rudolf Steiner's mission and impact*. In it, he asked the question (as a non-anthroposophist) – *How can we approach the esoteric aspects of his work?* He gives an example of Steiner describing the blooming of flowers in springtime, where elementals are freed by our interest. We free these beings through our love. Steiner proposed that a plant is a being, and that we are in a relationship of being-to-being with the plant – an I-Thou relationship. Such a relationship to the natural world is neither abstract nor theoretical.

A second title is a book by the journalist, Wolfgang Müller – *The Enigma of Rudolf Steiner: Irritation and Inspiration*. Mueller is well-read and advises the department for education. In his book, he offers an in-depth study of anthroposophy and describes Steiner's anthropology in a cogent and open manner – he is unapologetic.

A third perspective is offered by Steiner's own book – *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*. This book can be approached as if the author is in conversation with the reader. Tomas asked: *Is it possible to have a conversation with Steiner today?* At the end of the 'Foundations' course, Steiner commented that when the participants think back on the course and the lecture content, "*our thoughts will weave together. And I will think back.*" And on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1924, Steiner wrote, "*I am with my thoughts between you. The reality of thoughts can unite us, in as much as we must be separated in space.*" Can we enter into Steiner's thought and thinking 100 years after his death? Is it possible that Waldorf education can be actualised today by us thinking carefully and with good heart?

### **Leading Thoughts (i) – Constanza & Philipp**

(CK) These letters, or thoughts, constitute an 'anthropology of the threshold' – a focus on the essence, in which Steiner presents a powerful and condensed summary of his work. For a long while, we have worked with the extended version of Steiner's lectures and writings. Here, these thoughts are offered in a semi-poetic, semi-hermetic, semi-didactic style. Following his final visit to the UK, Steiner began to write the *Michael Letters* in the last months of his life. A theme that is woven throughout is that of

intelligence. The associated themes in the thoughts we are studying this weekend are ecology (micro and macro), memory and consciousness and morality. As noted at the recent INASTE conference, human intelligence is a blend of strength and fragility. *Michael* identified the warm intelligence of the heart, while *Ahriman* offers a frosty, 'clever' intelligence.

(PR) We are presented with a huge, cosmic theatre. This mighty being, *Michael*, witnesses how intelligence is sliding into the hands of humanity, and he aims to warm this intelligence. The other one – *Ahriman* – aims to grasp hold of intelligence and use it for 'his' own, separate ends. If we try to describe our predicament out of our human perspective- not the cosmic – we can identify the following features: we find ourselves part of nature and apart from nature; we can activate human agency, or slip into automatism; we can approach our lives with a gesture of warmth or chilliness; we can be merciless or caring; we can look for personal gain or work out of love for the deed. Finally, we can say, 'Yes' to the world, or say no to ourselves and the world. Two questions are suggested: *How does this process, this interplay of possibilities act on the soul?* And, *How, as educators, does this seeking and wrestling relate to our daily practice?* Wherever we are able, our task is to help children say, 'Yes' to the world.

### **Leading Thoughts (ii) – Robert**

The writing and speaking of Steiner have quite different qualities. For the reader and in reading, there is a certain timeless quality, whereas in speaking, Steiner focuses on the place and the people – the temporal-spatial framework where he is speaking.

The Leading Thoughts are condensed, and more or less impossible to summarise. These writings offer a path to knowledge that hopes / wishes to lead the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in the cosmos. The hope implies that arrival at the wished-for destination is uncertain. The pathway itself arises out of a deep feeling and the imperative to move.

In February 1925, the Leading Thought begins with a question: *What is earth in reality with the cosmos?* At about the same time, Steiner penned a new preface for his book, *Occult Science*. The fundamental texts – *The Philosophy of Freedom*, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, *Theosophy and Occult Science* stand together, while *Theosophy* (anthropology) and *Occult Science* (cosmology) stand side-by-side.

The earth can be pictured as a particle of dust, or a germ. Dust is dead, while a germ is a promise of life. The human being, in full self-consciousness, partakes with forces of thinking, to liberate the dead cosmos with hidden will-forces. An emergent, renewed cosmos appears in response.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Edwin Hubble mapped the starry world and discovered that the solar system is part of a much larger galactic system. The question arose: *Is the earth the centre of the galaxy?* Today, we know the earth is neither central nor peripheral. At

the centre, there seems to be what we call a 'black hole', containing thousands of galactic systems. Astrophysicists today use electromagnetic and gravitational waves to measure the cosmic distance and produce statistics. We observe dying processes in space. The macrocosm was once pure life; now, all is dying and cooling.

If we consider the earth to be a microcosm, then the human being is a micro-microcosm. We are children of the cosmos, but in our consciousness, we are children of the earth.

With regards to the particle-germ pictures, the will is the mysterious yet decisive dynamic. In May-June, we find ourselves in the middle of the germinating forces – the end of spring and the beginning of summer. A 'surplus' appears in the mineral, plant and animal worlds. In the human being, these forces lie in the will – the depths of the will, where we are deeply asleep and surrounded by the future. The human being and the earth are intricately connected in their destinies. We live in the death processes and accompany death, while we also carry new life.

And, as teachers, where do we experience the pure will forces? In the children! In each new-born, there is a bundle of will forces – forming and moving. The adult's task – parents and teachers – is to carry, hold and care for the children's will forces. An art of education has a macrocosmic task. School should not be regarded as simply a bourgeois activity, to create organised and compliant constituents of the system. In class 1 and class 12, the teacher beholds the future of humanity.

Finally, Robert called to mind a remark by Steiner, that one step in knowledge requires that a human being takes three steps in improving one's moral development. This is a principle of initiation practices – one step in knowledge for three steps in ethical conduct.

### **Leading Thoughts (iii) – *Nana***

The Leading Thoughts, the Class Lessons and the autobiography were written by Rudolf Steiner towards the end of his life. As described in his autobiography, an understanding of development came in the middle of his working life. In chapter 13, Steiner talks about the hindrances he experienced in leading from 'nature-science-world' into 'spirit-soul' realms. He describes these hindrances as ranging from easy to complex.

Later on in his life, through imaginative beholding, Steiner brought some understanding that before time entered into the world, there was a state of absolute being that was different from an organism. As a spiritual being, the human being is older than any other being. In order to develop into the present physical form, the human being had to be separated from all other beings. After all the other beings, the human being took the particular human shape and form.

As a macrocosmic being, the human being carried or incorporated all other beings. The process of separation from the 'all other' was a necessary development in order to create the microcosmic form.

In this concept of development, the notion that one can approach the topic with logic and reason, or to see the framework through a mathematical or linear lens, must be dispelled. There is a back-and-forth interplay of forces at work. Astral and etheric waves wash back and forth. We will move into a period where the plants and animals disappear. The human being will also disappear, and rejuvenating forces from primordial 'times' will nourish the human being to continue to develop.

The macro-micro framing of 'how things are' is played out in the deed and process of embryonic development, where the embryonic stages are at the same time, the tissues of the child-to-be. A human birth can be likened to the death of cosmic origin, and a human death is the birth of cosmic origin. This is a pre-condition for the blossoming of self-consciousness in the human being.

In these times, our relationship to the cosmic origin is lost; we are numbed by the transitory, perishable world of sense impressions. We are blind to that which is not a memory from the earthly sphere. How can we, with our self-consciousness, penetrate through the domains of Lucifer and Ahriman. In being born into the earth, our consciousness is dimmed and constrained to the material world. This dimming and darkening continues apace with the emergence of AI. Lucifer and Ahriman stand guard at two doors, aiming to rip out human consciousness.

We can learn to relate to the world of ideas, which are beings, and which we can lighten not darken, with our human intelligence. Through our emergent self-consciousness, we can form a new relationship to the cosmic being and the cosmic sheaves. In this task, the spiritual being *Michael* stands ready to guide and help. *Michael* is a self-controlled being, not a controlling or controlled being, and *Michael* is central to the impulse of Waldorf education. In our work with the children, we can open a new door to the future for humanity, with the support of this mighty spiritual being.

#### **Leading Thoughts (iv) – Christof**

We read, discussed in pairs and shared the Leading Thought of February 1925 – *Memory and Conscience*.

Christof touched on data suggesting that sleep problems are on the increase for both children and adults. In sleep we live other lives in other worlds. The human journey has no destination; it is a rhythmical journey between two worlds, and in making this endless journey, the human being is in the cosmic process. How to keep working for a free balance is a life task, given that balancing is creative and perpetually uncertain. Christof ended by citing the lecture given in Zurich in October 1918 (GA 182) – *The*



*Work of the Angels in Man's Astral Body* – and asked: *Can we awaken the images from this lecture, or are they dissolved?*

Presentation by **Lourdes** – *How is thinking planted in the seedbed of speech during early childhood?* In simple words, the first three years of life is the most important phase, the essential time of our life. William Wordsworth (*Intimations of Immortality*) puts it like this:

*"...But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home."*

In words of Rudolf Steiner, "the small child is a modest condensation of a huge world". In life before birth, the human being gathers from the cosmos the forces that he will need in his future life, and his individuality feels a strong wish to embody. In this, the newborn child is both a huge being and a helpless one. He needs us desperately, he needs to be seen, and simultaneously, he brings a powerful will that he wants to put in motion. He brings with him the most powerful force, which is the force of imitation. Steiner describes how, as human beings before birth, we live in a very close relation one with each other and how this gesture can only be translated into "earthly" words, such as compassion or love. Imitation is the image of this same gesture: a full devotion towards the other. Imitation is for the child his main learning tool. It will allow him to take hold of his body and slowly ground on earth. When we talk about *imitation*, we are talking about deep attention, a deep attention in us.

During this first phase of life, when the child is trying with endless effort to stand and walk and orientate himself in space, we must accompany him with love. There are very subtle phases. When the child feels welcome through our loving presence, he will start to gaze at us, and smile. These early gestures seem to express the immense joy of being here, with us, on earth: it is his first yes to life. All the effortless movements that the child realises to stand and walk are the echo of the moment when as spiritual beings we start to stand out as individualities. And for this tender individuality to stand and walk, it needs to feel our embrace, our protection, to find a shelter in us.

All this world of external movements, all these gestures, slowly transform themselves into inner movements, which are the basis for speaking, an inner need to know the world, to name it, and to communicate. Now he can walk, and move towards the world, and puts his full attention in trying to establish a dialog with the world, with us. The child is learning to speak, and he needs to find in the adult, full intention, meaning and truthfulness in what we say. To fully understand the world, the children need to be able to grasp the intention and the truth in our words, it is a fundamental need. The truthfulness united to our loving presence provide for the structures of language, which are formed before the speech appears. To be truly present in what we say and hold full interest in the child, will awaken in him the thinking forces. *Josep Maria Esquirol* speaks of the "non-indifference" as the way to awaken the capacity of thinking: "the sleeping thinking awakens when invoked by the personality. The threat

comes from indifference". Karl König speaks of the speech as "the seedbed in which the thinking is planted" (*The First three Years*). The sleeping thinking awakens when there is full presence and interest. Indifference or half-hearted attention has the opposite effect. Following uprightness and speech, the young child needs clarity from us. Human beings are united in the need to be understood by others.

In many early childhood centres, there is a loss of essence. The surface, the outside seems apparently beautiful, with lots of stuff, and increasingly sophisticated toys. A search of the word Waldorf in 'Google' will flash up "the Waldorf rainbow", which is a puzzle, the less so, "Waldorf toy". Such things are shallow and intellectual. In many places, the "nature corner" has lost its true meaning, with plenty of fancy features on it. A nature table is not meant to be loads of "beautiful" stuff. Freya Jaffke spoke about meaning of the nature table: to bring the Christ into the room. As simple as that! Nowadays we see in many early years settings lots of materials that are meant to provide possibilities of movement to the children (little steps, bridges, etc.), but our natural spaces are full of possibilities of movement, and nature provides the child a much richer experience for movement, for the senses, for play, for wonder, for joy... Is there a real need for all these materials?

Through imitation –the deep attention- supported by our loving presence, our truthful interest and meaningful, clear intentions the child will learn to walk, to talk and to think and will find its own place in life. Allowing the child to overcome these phases gently and respectfully will also give him a sense of success, a sense of happiness, a sense for the joy of living – a hunger for lifelong learning, no less!

#### Presentation by **Michal**

How to foster intelligence? Michal spoke about an incident in the life of *Aldo Leopold* (1887-1948). Leopold was an American writer, philosopher, naturalist, scientist, ecologist, forester, conservationist and environmentalist. He was a professor at the University of Wisconsin. A champion of wildlife, and a great teacher. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1944, in a confession, he told something that he had never told before. Leopold's editor, Hans Hochbaum wrote: "*The wolf is missing from all your writing. Have you got a drop of wolf blood on your hands?*"

At the age of 21, in 1909, as an employee of the US Forestry Service, Leopold began some work in the south-west of the USA. His job was to inspect the timber that had been cut down. He was living in very wild, untamed countryside. He slept out as a hunter-gatherer and travelled on horseback.

Leopold had no fondness for predators; they harmed stock and killed deer. Leopold wanted to eradicate wolves and create a hunter's paradise. On one occasion, he shot a number of wolves, and killed many, until his bullets ran out. A mother-wolf and her pups were killed and / or injured. In doing this, Leopold ripped up the hunter's code – never to abandon an injured animal. At some point in this event, Leopold noticed a

dying wolf with a *"fierce, green fire dying in her eyes."* The fire flickered and died and burnt a hole in his heart. He described something new in the wolf's eyes, known only to her and the mountain.

In his book, *Thinking Like a Mountain*, Leopold describes this moment of revelation – a slap to his own values and beliefs. He underwent a process of transformation at this point. He realised that the mountain & the wolf knew something more holy than him. Leopold began a crusade, and the dying wolf was the midwife to his new consciousness. The loss of predators led to erosion and the distortion of water courses. Michal mentioned the book, *Think like a Planet*, by David Spangler, and suggested that the work of Leopold provided a forerunner for this planetary perspective that brings together partnership and participation in our thinking about the world.

Spangler talks about the importance of listening to nature and wildlife. Nature has the right to be because it is. Nature is a being with rights. It is simply hubris to suppose that nature can be used, controlled and then thrown away.

In 1948, while fighting a forest fire in a conservation area, Leopold had a heart attack and died. The following year, in 1949, his book, *Thinking Like a Mountain*, was published and it has become a 'green Bible'. In some ways, this book and Steiner's work create a certain symbiosis.

Leopold was born at the end of the 'dark age' - Kali Yuga – in 1887 (Steiner, GA 11). The materialistic tendency of thinking which had held sway in the 19<sup>th</sup> century made a huge shift into the light. Leopold senses, but he cannot, at this point, join this new mode of consciousness.

Nature stories have a unique element. In the northern mystery centres, the pupil was directed to work on his feeling life in connection to nature and the cycle of the year. According to Steiner, "normal people – the uninitiated – could not bear this mystery path. Steiner left behind a modern training, in the form of the Soul Calendar, with the weekly verses. Here is a path of following the seasons – the cold and the dark, the warmth and the light. Here is a course designed to feel with the cycle of nature, to build a new 'I' – a new relationship with nature. Delicate streams weave in and out between the soul and nature. Understanding between soul and world grows. In Verse 50 (mid-March),

*"Thus to the human ego speaks  
In mighty revelation,  
Unfolding its inherent powers,  
The joy of growth throughout the world:  
I carry into you my life  
From its enchanted bondage  
And so attain my truest goal.*

In the third lecture of the 'Foundations' course, Steiner lays out how the human being is on a stage, active in a cosmic drama as world events unfold. We are not simply in the audience, spectating.

What is the essence of a nature story? It is true and coherent. Some people can tell nature stories 'naturally'; it is a gift. For most, though, it is hard work, to create something that is true and lasting, and not a fake. To be able to say something from within – the water, the bird, the tree – that speaks to the children. We are dealing here with 'pre-science' science.

Firstly, try to understand the green fire in the wolf's eyes, get to know how the mountain thinks. How to do this? Through observation and developing interest in what we see and sense. To make relationships with birds and flowers. Allow the sense to work, speak to yourself about the petals, the leaves, the wings, the flight. Work on your own, or with others, to understand the depth, the 'under-ness' of things.

Secondly, ask questions. Ask the oak tree: *What do you need? What do you want?* Ask the buttercup: *What do you do?* A good nature story opens up the well of the child's soul. Questions are fertile ground for finding and developing stories.

After the developmental changes in the 9<sup>th</sup> / 10<sup>th</sup> year, warm, loving, and detailed accounts of nature can be very powerful. Through the curricular themes of agriculture and gardening, the growing process can be experienced directly when children touch the earth, turn the soil over and follow what it takes to bring forth a carrot. Gardening slows you down; time moves differently.

In *Discussions* 9-12, Steiner demonstrates that he is a whole-hearted ecologist. In nature studies he urges the teachers not to talk about the usefulness of plants, or the extent to which plants serve us. Instead, talk about relationships with the plants, the trees, the garden, the earth.

Michal closed by talking about something from Africa. *Wangari Maathai* (1940-2011) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her contribution to "sustainable development, democracy and peace." She is associated with the development of the *green belt movement*. In the kikuyu tribe, there is a custom whereby, after a birth in the community, the women return home from the birth and collect unblemished clusters of green bananas. Then, they dig up a 'perfect' sweet potato, and choose a fat, well-nourished lamb to be slaughtered and cooked, and then sprinkled with cane sugar. The meal is then offered to the new mother, who chews the meat, potatoes and bananas, and then offers the juice to the new-born baby. This custom takes place before the child is given mother's milk. In this ceremony / ritual of welcome, the baby becomes a child of the human being and a child of the earth in one.

*How can we find the elixir in our pedagogy to enable our pupils and students to be children of humankind and children of the earth?"*

Presentation by **Chih Hung** (summary of report introduced by Nana, in Chih-Hung's absence). The written report is attached to these minutes.

- AI has an enormous hold on us. How can we develop courage in this tense situation – an opportunity to manifest our most fundamental human qualities?
- We are called to care more deeply and be more conscious than ever before.
- We need to collaborate whole-heartedly with those around us.
- Southeast Asia is very exposed to the influx of AI and digital tech.
- The mental well-being of young people has dived; nature's integrity is being eroded.
- We must strengthen our relationships to nature, outwardly, and inwardly, to ourselves.
- This calls for a paradigm shift in education. We have the task of developing an inner compass and emphasising salutogenesis.

Conventional approaches will not meet the challenge. A new methodology of self-education has to be sought. Such a methodology could extend to the rarely years and the primary phases too.

*What would be at the roots of such a methodology?*

In Taiwan and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, three 'roots' can be traced: *Daoism*, *Confucianism* and *Buddhism*.

In *Daoism* can be found the search for the true human being. Worldly desires are minimised, while a person seeks to align their nature with the Dao: 道 – 'the natural way of the universe'.

*Confucianism* focuses on recognising one's destiny and developing it, attaining knowledge, harmonising feelings, devotion to family and friends, and living to bring peace into the world.

*Buddhism* teaches the awakening and nurturing of perceptions and right concepts – the phenomena and ideas of the world.

There are some supplementary steps to tread, and tasks to do.

The Chinese character for love - 愛 – to love people with your actions and through your heart – was mentioned. As to the future, the crucial and essential importance of awakening the will in human beings was stated.

**new members**

*Porn Panosot* (Thailand) was welcomed to the meeting and gave a short personal introduction. As a medical doctor, Porn worked for many years with abused children and child prostitutes. He noticed a wide gap between 'middle-class' children and others, with more and more children becoming trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and abuse. He asked himself how to do something that might provide an example of how to fill this gaping hole in Thai society. Porn and Janpen, his wife, studied Waldorf education in *Spring Valley* (USA) for three years, before returning to Thailand. In 1996, they began a Waldorf start-up, with just 7 children, four of whom were their own children. As the home school grew, it moved to different locations, until there came a point where there were 100+ pupils attending an old kindergarten setting, as an 'illegal' – unregistered school. At this point, the school moved again, right across the city. Fortunately, the impact of this move was that less than 10% of families left. In 2007, the parents, working in cooperation with *die Freunde der Erziehungskunst*, obtained the current site – *Panyotai* – and applied for registration as a school. Over the years, Porn progressed from working as a kindergarten teacher, to a class teacher, to a high school teacher. Today, he still works with each class through the school and meets each child and young person in the classroom. More recently, Porn has resumed his practice as a medical doctor, and works as teacher and doctor, using anthroposophical medicines and therapies. In recent times, the school at Panyotai has offered a training in art therapy for 15 colleagues. Porn stressed that in the last decade, children have become more vulnerable, stressed and fragile. During the periods of lockdown, artwork was offered to children and parents. The offer was to the community, not simply an extension of school. A new phase is soon to begin, with the launch of a course in 'emergency education', in October 2025, with the support of *die Freunde*. Porn ended by flourishing an 'English' copy of '*Foundations*' – formerly, *The Study of Man, Practical Advice, & Discussions*. In 2019, following an initiative by *Florian Osswald* and *Christian Boettger*, the *Foundations* text was translated, as an affordable edition. It is now available in 6 continents. The proceeds from the publication are shared between Panyotai School, Spring Valley and the Pedagogical Section.

We look forward to welcoming *Vanessa Pphl & Andrew Hill* in Dornach, in November 2025.

*Rieko* attends her final Hague Circle meeting this weekend. The next member for Japan will be *Shiori Ando*.

*Mara Svilane* has the agreement of colleagues in Lithuania and Latvia. Estonia has said, 'no', for the time being. *Mara* and three colleagues have taken on the running of IAO. *Mara* will join the Hague Circle in November 2025.

After a process of dialogue, *Eun Sim Yang* is proposed as a new member of the circle for Korea. She is a Class Member, part of the Korean Waldorf Association and a eurythmist by training. *Eun Sim Yang* helped to found the Seoul Waldorf School, which

is a Class 1 to 12 school, and situated in town. *Eun Sim Yang* will be invited to the November meeting in Dornach.

### **... and departures pending**

Stefan will leave the circle in May 2026. Michael's future in the Council is uncertain, following his recent illness. Henning is also nearing the end of his tenure. Tomáš sits in the Council as a Czech living in Germany, while Nana represents die Freunde.

Regarding the identification of a new German representative, there are some tensions and differences regarding process and individual candidates. There have been discussions and the airing of perspectives in the Preparation Group. With over 500 institutions in Germany, we may be looking at more than one new representative.

Trevor outlined the process as it stands, which was established verbally over a number of meetings around the Covid lock-down periods. The process will be written down in a one-page document and shared with Council members with the minutes.

*Christine* questioned the process and asked whether members of the Council will be consulted. Some German colleagues shared their views. Conversations will take place outside this meeting.

### **Meeting with Hungarian colleagues**

Five colleagues joined the meeting for a session – a teacher and present of *the Hungarian Waldorf Association*, an early years educator, a schoolteacher, and two people representing school associations.

- The work of the *Waldorf House* was shared. The 'House' is a teacher training centre, not a physical house. It is both an initial teacher education centre, and a professional development centre for all colleagues. Research is the third primary activity.
- The central challenge for the Hungarian Waldorf Association is teacher recruitment; the age-profile of teachers is not so youthful.
- There is an agreement with the education ministry that recognises Waldorf schools, teachers and the education generally. An early years or lower schoolteacher is required to have a state teacher degree and a Waldorf degree. University partnerships and/or co-operation have been considered. The association made contact with 5 different universities, but the process has not been fruitful. Some universities include elements of Waldorf education in 'minor pathway' formats.
- The birth-rate in Hungary is declining, creating a demographic in which there are fewer children, and therefore, fewer children in Waldorf schools.
- The parents make a positive choice for the schools, having turned away from the state model of education.

- The Hungarian Association works in advocating in two closely-linked directions – maintaining the Waldorf ethos and quality and finding a ‘best fit’ with state requirements.
- The school colleges and faculties sometimes lack an awareness of each other, and so the association works to create a mood of mutual awareness and cooperation.
- in essence the layers of the association’s work are:
  - a) caring for the quality of the existing schools
  - b) developing the quality of the new and emerging schools
  - c) fostering contacts with the international Waldorf movement, the national government and the municipal authorities
- relationships with the state on a pedagogical level are fairly positive, and the finances too. 50% of the schools’ budgets are funded by the national government.
- national policy on centralisation and digitalisation have difficult consequences for the schools. The state requires lots of information and collects huge amounts of data, which is surely connected to a strategy of control.
- on an international level, the association pursues a strategy of looking for partnerships on an ‘I’ level. For example, a Hungarian colleague is a member of the ECSWE Board.
- the association has been in existence for 30 years. There is a need for a re-structure, and there are multiple problems – mostly finance-related – in the kindergartens, schools and the association itself.
- building and energy costs are continually rising. Average teacher salaries are lower than in much of Europe. The financial needs impact on rising school fees. Many families have reached a certain limit with regards to their ability to pay. At the *Pestihidegkut* school, parents are expected to pay €200 per month, per child. This is a very big ask when average monthly salaries are €600. At the same time, class sizes are going down, from 30 to 24 in some places. This adds to the financial burden being carried.
- the association experiences similar economic challenges. The existence of Waldorf House is required; it must function, but the state offers nothing from the public purse. The employees in the Waldorf House must have the same level of qualifications and competencies as would be expected in a public organisation. Over the last two years, the government has raised salaries a bit, but Waldorf House employees have received no increases. This would have entailed raising subscriptions from the schools by 60%. This was not possible and consequently, Waldorf House has lost two co-workers. Meanwhile, the government continues to give new tasks in an unpredictable manner, and Waldorf House has had to restructure on the hoof. One positive element is a greater level of co-operation on the ground between the Waldorf House and the kindergartens and schools.
- The national association and Waldorf House meet every two weeks. The faculty delegates of the kindergartens and schools meet 6 times a year, where reporting



is a big element. Recent themes have included the study of three-folding and the transition from kindergarten into school. In addition, there are two additional meetings each year where decisions have to be taken. A significant challenge right now is to how to react / respond to the plethora of laws and regulations that roll out.

- The majority of kindergartens have just one group; a few have two. Exceptionally – in one case – a kindergarten has 4 groups. The kindergarten movement is still growing, with 14 young initiatives. A new challenge is that the state wants to centralise teacher training too. The next big task that lies ahead is the curriculum in the kindergarten.
- Over the last 10 years, the Hungarian Waldorf Association has worked to increase its public profile and become better known. Before that, the organisation was relatively unknown. A data-set was created following research into the activities of Waldorf alumni, and the visibility of Waldorf education has begun to push into the public discourse.
- A question was asked about the activity of *Tamás Vekerdy*. Tamás is one of Hungary's top educationalists and founder of the Waldorf Schools. Although, he is not so prominent in the public realm, Vekerdy is in regular contact with the Hungarian schools.

### **'curriculum research, curriculum development, curriculum renewal' – taking stock and celebrating**

*Tomás* introduced the session and welcomed the guests: *Tobias Richter* and *Christian Boettger*. *Christof* and *Henning* spoke on behalf of the Hague Circle.

If we look back 33 years (1992), the Hague Circle asked the question – *What is necessary in the school movement?* There was a growing number of schools and a very slim curriculum plan – the *Heydebrand* curriculum plan – that one could find all over the Waldorf world. It was agreed to identify an individual who could take on the task of collecting and compiling curricular suggestions and materials from many different places. *Tobias Richter* was granted the task. It was a new piece of work in undeveloped terrain. *Christof* pointed out that *Tobias* had the precise balance of temperaments to carry out this "horrific" piece of work! *Christian* was the close associate and colleague of *Tobias* in this task. *Michael Zech* also played a major role in supporting and assisting in the work.

*Steiner* himself led a path of continuing curriculum development with the original group of teachers in Stuttgart. *Stockmeyer* made a huge contribution by researching in detail what *Steiner* had said about the curricular plan, where he said it, and when.

The first Richter draft led to some upheaval in Austria. The criticism was that a detailed curricular or syllabus would weaken the teachers' imaginative powers and

creativity. Another perspective was that if something was written down, then this would provide opportunities for intuitive and creative practice. From another angle, there was anxiety that governmental policy and regulation in the field of syllabus and curriculum would serve to overwhelm the schools. So, it was clear enough, the curriculum work was seen as both a potential burden and a source for inspiration. One possible effect of state intervention might be that, in the absence of a curricular plan, the movement ran the risk of losing the rationale and hierarchy of the subjects. In the German-speaking world, a high level of consciousness was being given to the theme of curriculum research and renewal. For example, on the basis of the *Heydebrand* plan and the *Stockmeyer* compilation, something like 100 people from Austria, Switzerland and Germany shared their knowledge over the internet. An exercise in re-writing, updating and disseminating was conducted to make the materials available to all, the world over. The initial fruits of *Richter's* work were published, and the book was bought by many teachers and parents.

If your work is criticised, there is a certain tendency to be defensive and deny the criticism. If your work is praised, that can also be a little uncomfortable. However, *Tobias* is a very skilled listener. Over the last 7 years, a team of 6 – 3 women and 3 men – have worked with *Tobias* – “the wisest and most reliable” of people. He has shown extraordinary flexibility in thinking and innovating, to find new formulations for topics and themes. Under his leadership, the team have always been on the look-out for what is new. For example, in the new edition, there is a chapter devoted to *synergy* – looking for synergetic (cross-curricular) possibilities.

*Christian* said he was delighted to be able to thank *Tobias* in this circle, and informed members that a set of Steiner's chalk drawing had been presented to *Tobias* to stimulate further his inspiration.

*Tobias* recalled how *Stefan Leber* had turned to him and said, “You do it!” *Tobias* then mentioned a verse by Goethe, in which he commented that a human being alone is not very capable, yet if we unite, we can go further together.

300 colleagues have worked on this new edition. In *Practical Advice to Teachers*, Steiner mentions a certain aspiration to be completely free in terms of lesson planning and curriculum work. At the same time, Steiner was a realist and a pragmatist and showed himself to be flexible and able to make compromises. He was not a ‘binary’ sort of fellow, more an ‘as well as’ kind of person. Then in the final lecture of the 3-lecture series on the curriculum, Steiner refers to the overriding value and importance of observing the child and then the teacher will know what to do.

So, undoubtedly, a tension exists in this work of curriculum compilation and research. *Christian* called to mind the word of *Rudolf Grosse*, who spoke about the need for ‘window cleaning’ to let in the spiritual light. In gathering so much work and so many ideas from so many people, *Tobias* has acted as a window-cleaner. The style is more of

an 'open' postscript than a prescription. Now, several editions and translations later, more and more colleagues all over the globe can be reached. The unwritten, undrawn, unspoken curriculum can appear as though out of the mist. Or, like music, where the essential lies between the notes. This where the future lies. May the work continue.

*Henning* spoke in deep appreciation of *Christian* – a member and part of the project since its very inception. They first met in 2004, when *Henning* showed *Christian* a trick with a fork, a spoon and a match. Unlike many people, *Christian* lay down on the floor and didn't get up until he had cracked the puzzle. This is a picture that characterises *Christian* so well. Any question or problem is received as a challenge. He is always there; he always shows up. He lives with the gesture whereby he creates space within which others can work. As an engineer, he is comfortable with solving problems in the world of things – planes and rockets – too. For 20 years, he was a high school teacher of mathematics and physics in *Kassel*. His former students carry very positive impressions of a teacher who really 'saw' them. He has also met with personal tragedies with the death and passing of two sons in recent times – in Nicaragua and the Canary Islands. Through these sad and tragic events, *Christian* continued to work on what was needed, with his qualities of strength and truthfulness. *Henning* finished by paraphrasing a quote from the President of the Lawyer's Society in Germany: "To lead means to let others be successful."

### **Business points**

The **Trademark Group** currently consists of *Robert Thomas, Florian Osswald, Philipp Reubke, Nana Goebel* and *Susan Howard* (IASWECE).

Two sorts of questions tend to arise as the main business:

- a) from schools where there is a wish to be recognised and appear on the Waldorf World List School,
- b) from countries that have a national association / federation and who wish to issue license contracts.

A third item of business comes in the form of complaints – mostly from disaffected parents, or former parents, who have criticisms of the quality of education offered and / or the conduct of teachers.

### **Schools and Teacher Education**

Upper School accreditation - *Bielsko-Biala*, Poland. The school is on the World Schools' List, but it is not purely a Waldorf school. The period of inclusion on the list lapsed, and the colleagues there pointed this out, and asked for a renewal on the list. In principle, Nana believes we can say, 'yes', although a visit and a report are the preferred option. The school has a new leader, who is well-organised, and the staff seem to be engaged. **Agreed:** *Bret Kožužník* (*Ostrawa, CZ*), will be contacted by Nana and asked to make a visit and write an evaluation report.

The Waldorf School in *Sofia*, Bulgaria – NG reported that there is a question as to whether it is a private school, or a Waldorf school. The Board hires and fires and there is a level of anxiety amongst staff. There is a lot of parental interest and involvement. One parent has written to the Hague Circle / IAO asking whether it is indeed still a Waldorf school. NG paid a 2-day visit with a colleague from IAO, *Slavomir Lichvár*, and observed classroom lessons. The evaluation report indicates that some standards are not met for the school to carry the name, 'Waldorf'. A letter outlining the need for an action-plan and a timeframe has been sent. NG and *Slavomir Lichvár* will return in a year to monitor progress. After the follow-up visit, a decision about Waldorf status will need to be taken.

The Madu School in *Bali*. Nana reported that one expert evaluation report has been received; a second one is awaited by September 2025. Indonesia is largely *terra incognita* regarding our knowledge & experience of so-called 'Waldorf' schools

The Advaya Shaale Waldorf School in *Bangalore* – Nana has visited the school, and it is on the World Schools' List, having applied, and *Gopa* and *Michal ben Shalom* having signalled their agreement. There is no high school. The school is based in town; it is a lower middle-class demographic, and the school has simple and modest buildings. The group of around 10-15 colleagues seems to work well, and the school has an active parent-body.

The Lisi Waldorf school in *Tbilisi* applied to go on the list and is successful. Nana and *Christof* visited the school and sat in lessons. They formed favourable impressions – the school has beauty, it is organised, and the children work hard. The school has from kindergarten to class 4. There is a non-profit organisation, and the school association rents the property from a building company on a 50-year lease. The written report has not yet been compiled.

There is the issue of 'fake' schools, where the name is used, but there is no practice – for example, in Amman, Nepal and Türkiye (Ankara and Izmir). The question arises: What is the next step with such schools? A legal case raises the spectre of time and money. How long, and who pays?

*Stefan* pointed out that for more than 10 years the German Bund has paid €30-40k annually on this challenge. To what extent do we build a fence together, or does the Bund have to continue bearing the load? The Trademark Group needs some financial underpinning on an international level.

*Trevor* suggested a middle way between ignoring the problem and launching legal action which is likely to be lengthy and costly. He proposed that a warning letter is sent to the school / institution, informing them that unless they stop using the

trademark, 'Steiner' and / or 'Waldorf', the education ministry in the relevant country will be contacted and informed.

The federation in *South Africa* carries the trademark. The national association wants to comply with international arrangements but wishes to retain its nation-wide licence. The Council confirmed support for a 'hand-in-hand' arrangement, with a notion of equivalence and shared working arrangements in practice.

In *Japan*, there are 7 schools and 5 project schools. *Philipp* and *Nana* are in negotiation with Japanese colleagues regarding a licence. The view was expressed that the time and effort spent on licence bureaucracy should not hamper the development of the movement itself.

The government in *Portugal* has requested that the schools are overseen by a qualifications authority. In the Waldorf movement, the national association usually performs this recognising role by 'naming' a school as a member school. However, the Portuguese authorities have stipulated that the schools need a responsible body to recognise the schools. The German Bund and the Trademark Group are looking at this issue. *Trevor* has been identified as a potential colleague in this piece of work. The Hague Circle signalled its intention to begin developing the groundwork to become a responsible body in the form of a qualifications authority.

*Ireland*: a request has been received from the Irish teacher education course – *SWIM*, asking for support and some recognition from the International Council. *Trevor* will liaise with colleagues in Ireland, make a visit, undertake an evaluation and report back to the Council.

**Recommendations for the Development of a National Association for Steiner Waldorf Education** Melanie reported that we did approve the guidelines at the November 2024 meeting. ECSWE was consulted and, following this, the working group looked at 5 or 6 suggestions and recommendations – nuances to improve clarity and open-ness: support based on relationship, 'resolving conflicts' replaced with 'provide practices on how to resolve conflicts', a Board may be elected, chosen or appointed, depending on the circumstances. A note about the paper - 'Essential characteristics of Waldorf Pedagogy', will be added. An underlying principle was reiterated that a national association does not interfere, as long as the centre, school, or course meets the association's criteria for membership.

The Hague Circle adopted the final version of the paper and entrusts the working group with making the adaptations and tweaks identified above. This document is intended to provide guidance and a practical tool for emerging federations and associations and also serves as a 'good practice' resource for existing associations and federations to discuss and reflect, in the context of school and course self-evaluation processes.

## **INASTE Conference – May 2025, Vienna**

In Vienna, in May, INASTE held its annual congress. 150 people attended. There was a call for papers. *Jost Schieren* included Steiner in his talk, but most of the other speakers focused on drawing comparisons. Caroline Bratt, a teacher educator from Sweden is the new INASTE co-ordinator.

**The October Conference in Paris** – The conference will address the theme: *Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education*. It is intended for parents and teachers. For 25 years, Waldorf education in France has been attacked as an ‘esoteric cult’. The criticism and hostility have included mental manipulation of what has been written and spoken. The rationale behind the conference is to name and clarify what is meant by anthroposophy and the relationship between the education and science of the spirit. The underlying aim is to seek to understand the developing human being, recognising that teaching and learning evolve with society and the spirit of our times. In connection with the conference theme, the work of *Natalia Golovanova*, doctoral student in educational sciences at the University of Upper Alsace in Mulhouse (France), and fellow at the Graduate School in Waldorf Education, Alanus was mentioned.

**Waldorf World Early Childhood Conference 2026.** *Lourdes* reported that this conference will celebrate 100 years of Steiner Waldorf early childhood care and education. It will be held in Dornach from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026. The conference title is, *Kindness, Strength and Love – seeds for a healthy unfolding*. Included in the proceedings, *Paula Levy* will focus on the history of the early childhood work and *Philip Gelitz* will talk about the present situation. *Die Freunde der Erziehungskunst* is supporting the publication of two new titles in connection with this event.

## **... and to farewells**

*Nana* spoke: *Rieko* pioneered the opening of the first Waldorf school in Asia, in Japan, in 1987. *Rieko* and colleagues worked for 17 years in an unregistered school, in a tiny apartment in downtown Tokyo. She taught eurythmy from the outset and became Director of the school. Later on, she continued her pioneering activity and began to work with eurythmy in Taiwan. She joined the Hague Circle in 2010, again as a pioneer from the ‘East’. There are some people who do not talk a lot, and who have a huge impact. You can sense this person’s strong, warm will in her handshake, and her determination and playfulness in her rejuvenating in the field of eurythmy. We wish her, *Adieu*, and farewell.

*Christopher* spoke: *Robert* has offered decades of help, friendship and service to the movement and to the Hague Circle. His presence is heartwarming, and his sense of duty stands like a pillar in our midst. He will be sorely missed. As a Franco-Swiss, he

brings clarity, precision and brevity, while the depth of his thinking is revealed in the strength of his articulation. And then, of course, there is his brimming humour, often signalled through his array of facial gestures, which have often acted as a barometer in our meetings. He is a friend, and a colleague. As a baby-boomer, he was born shortly after the end of the second world war. Over the last 70 or 80 years we have lived an era of peace and stability, and we feel that this period is coming to a close. Thankfully, *Robert* will continue to work in teacher education in Zurich and Geneva, sharing the fruits of his deep searching for the spirit, alongside his clear-eyed ability to face reality. *Robert*, we wish you a good future, and thank you for your ever-helpful presence.

In reply, *Robert* called to mind some words of *Christian Morgenstern* – ‘those who walk towards truth walk alone; then, you join and walk together.

### *Essential Characteristics of Waldorf Pedagogy* – an update

- the paper is a dynamic piece of work, necessarily subject to change and revision.
- A couple of comments and additions were proposed: a footnote about different curricula around the world (e.g. Norway, New Zealand); the aspiration to have eurythmy present in each school.

Nana will adjust the paper accordingly. **The paper was adopted by the Council and thanks given to the working group for their input and work.**

The context includes the work we have undertaken in the past year, along with the work for the next 2 years – preparations & planning, and participation in the *World Teachers' Conference 2027*.

*Henning* introduced the topic, recalling a certain moment from 2014, during a Hague Circle meeting in Harduf, Israel. At the time, the second intifada was taking place in Gaza. *Bernd Ruf* had been in the area just before the meeting, and he reported to Class 12 students what he had witnessed. The students were moved. A question was asked: *What is the main thing that you will take with you from your education?* One young woman spoke about how, following school, many young Israeli spend two years doing military service. At this point, “friends become foes”. She said that thanks to her education, “*I will always see the human being first*”, and not all sorts of other things. Moving on to the events around *Waldorf 100*, the human being was the centre-piece. Celebrating and appreciating the layers with the human being – the cognitive, the emotional-aesthetic and the volitional. Aside from this, the focal points were inviting & accepting, openness to diversity, and welcoming an abundance of projects through grass roots contributions, in which suggestions from pupils, parents, teachers and schools were welcomed. In 2019, the aim was to address the children and young people in the first instance, and to create an invitational, participatory mode.

*Henning* proposed that, in this current scenario, we need to focus firstly on how we reach colleagues around the world, and secondly, how we stimulate interest in the work and study of the theme: *the earth, the human being, the cosmos*. This will be a key theme for the conference in 2027. For the 2019 celebrations,

#### Actions:

- Trevor & Henning will compile the work we have done so far – the minutes, the talks, the articles.
- Henning will write a foreword. The materials will be made available as a 'working document'.
- A letter will be written to all the early childhood centres, schools and teacher education courses around the world. The letter will invite colleagues to engage with the content of the *Leading Thoughts*, through professional development days, teachers' meetings, and initial teacher education.

#### Open space / review

Constanza spoke about the need for an article to all schools in support of the Richter – Boettger research. The article can be reminder that this is ongoing work, and that collegial participation is welcome. The mood of this work is spiritive, rather than normative. *Christian Boettger* will write a piece that will go out with the minutes.

Tomas spoke about the contribution of *Vanessa Pohl* in the curriculum research working group. We could invite her to carry this theme within the Council. He gave deep thanks for the work done in curriculum research. He commented that the approach to study led by Christof this morning had been fruitful.

Melanie mentioned the need for schools and partner organisations to start allocating funds for conference-participation in 2027. Perhaps the funds for national conferences could be redirected to 2027. She suggested that the creation of simple web-page for 2027, with dates and timings, plus a string of articles to promote and support the conference theme. Also, short video-clips from participants regarding the content and style of this meeting.

Elard writes an article for Dutch colleagues following each meeting. He asks whether the presenters can provide written summaries of the presentations.

Following our meetings, Christina gives an oral report to colleagues in Denmark. She tries to provoke questions to generate interest. Regarding the study-focus, she suggests that we bring back practical examples from the schools to these meetings: *How are colleagues working with this material?*

William reported that the last meeting left him with many questions that he presented to colleagues in South Africa. In return, they said: *Where are the answers?* The colleagues are working on some of the themes that we raise.



Christof commented that the verse spoken at the beginning of the morning is a meditative verse, which has a clear rhyming structure in German, but not in other languages. He asked whether Steiner's rhyming structure has a clear purpose?

Zsolt suggested that we could 'pull' colleagues into sharing our work – for example, the methods of studying the Leading Thoughts - via short 'taster' video-clips.

Christopher said that it's painful not to have a representative from the UK in the circle. Trevor and Christopher are members, but they do not work in the schools any longer, or the national association. This matter will be taken up in the Preparation Group.

The meeting closed at midday. We meet again in November, in *Dornach*.

### Dates

- 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025 – **PG** zoom 14.00 – 16.00 (CEST)
- 17<sup>th</sup> September 2025 – **PG** zoom 11.00 – 13.00 (CEST)
- 16<sup>th</sup> (17.00) – 17<sup>th</sup> (15.00) October 2025 - **PG** meeting in *Paris*
- 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> October – seminar / conference + French colleagues in *Paris*
- 20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2025 – **Hague Circle** – *Dornach*
- 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026 – International Early Years Conference - *Kindness, Strength and Love – seeds for a healthy unfolding* - *Dornach*
- 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> May 2026 – venue tbc
- 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2026 – *Dornach*
- 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> May 2027 – venue tbc
- November 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2027 – dates tbc - *Dornach*

*Trevor Mephram*  
(July 2025)