



Pedagogical Section  
at the Goetheanum

# Journal



## The Journal of the Pedagogical Section

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Tel.: 0041 61 706 43 15  
Tel.: 0041 61 706 43 73  
Fax: 0041 61 706 44 74  
E-Mail: [paed.sektion@goetheanum.ch](mailto:paed.sektion@goetheanum.ch)  
Homepage: [www.paedagogik-goetheanum.ch](http://www.paedagogik-goetheanum.ch)

**Editors:** Florian Osswald, Dorothee Prange, Claus-Peter Röh

**Correction:** Angela Wesser

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## Foreword

*Dear Colleagues,*

The Waldorf 100 Year with all its events and celebrations is in full swing!

1100 participants attended the world educators' conference in Dornach. Challenging social questions were the focus, even lectures given in more than one language developed into social tasks. The (class) teacher conference in Bangkok had quite a different character. It took place in great heat at the Panyotai School. There were 300 participants who worked deeply with principles and how to transform them to fit today's challenges.

Are we actually waking up to the tasks facing us in order to carry and support Waldorf Pedagogy over the next few decades?

The International Forum for Steiner/Waldorf Education (Hague Circle) is made up of colleagues from all around the world. This group shares members' impressions and experiences and works on questions arising from across the globe. This work has led to a statement and a working paper:

1. **Charter by the International Forum for Steiner/Waldorf Education (Hague Circle) on education in a digital world** (written in Prague)
2. **Discourse on Healthy Childhood** (Practical advice arising from the charter for use in the schools) Different perspectives on the use of digital technology at home and at school

**!!!!!! – We would welcome these documents to be translated into your language and shared and discussed with parents and the wider public !!!!!!!**

This theme leads on to the concept of a media curriculum for Waldorf and Rudolf Steiner Schools worldwide. Are we keeping up with changes in society? In November a group of people will be researching this question at the Goetheanum. Please send us your country's or your school's media curriculum – even if it's in its infancy. This will be a great help for us.

**Please send us any documents on this!!!!!!**

And finally the International Forum continued to consider shared concerns in Edinburgh. There are articles on:

- **The work by the International Forum** – a personal view by a participant
- **The work in the British movement and its challenges**
- **A review of the most recent meeting**

We would also like to draw your attention to several new books published on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Waldorf Schools, often following an extensive preparation period. Many of them are listed on the cover of this edition. There is a book review in this journal of

**Nana Göbel's 'History of Waldorf Education'** in three volumes.

We hope many of you will be keen to read these books!

*The Pedagogical Section*

## 'THE WALDORF IMPULSE' – A Birthday Present

*Aban Bana, Mumbai, India*

It was in the year nineteen-nineteen,  
When the end of the First World War had been.  
There came to Dr Rudolf Steiner a friend,  
Who wanted a school in order to send  
The children of the workers of his factory,  
And thus began the Waldorf story.

Emil Molt was the factory head,  
With compassion and foresight his staff he led.  
Rudolf Steiner fulfilled Emil Molt's dream,  
Giving lectures to the new Waldorf teachers' team.

An education based upon his spiritual insight,  
Of the three-fold aspect of strength, warmth and light.  
A curriculum that meets the needs of the child,  
That they may grow to be truthful, brave and kind (mild).

On the wings of Anthroposophy, east to China,  
As also to the west, to Argen-taina, (to rhyme with China).  
With India and many other countries in between,  
Remember, now we're in twenty-nineteen!

So! Waldorf Education is here to stay.  
For future generations Waldorf lights the way,  
That they may grow up without conflict and strife.  
There is hope for children from all walks of life!

# The Waldorf School and Its People (translation of the book is in progress)

*Christof Wiechert*

*Translated by Dorit Winter*

## **Review**

Before me lies a beautifully crafted slipcase, containing three volumes of the history of Waldorf schools worldwide. Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Waldorf Education, timely in 2019, it has been compiled by Nana Göbel and published by Verlag Freies Geistesleben.

The worldwide school movement has thus been presented with a gift of inestimable value.

## **Form**

When a pebble is cast into a pond, concentric circles radiate from the point of entry to the shore.

That is how the first part is formed: The founding of the school in Stuttgart in 1919 is central, followed by the appearance of subsequent foundings which emanate from this first Waldorf school. The "shore" is the limiting obstruction of the Second World War. Nevertheless, by then 42 schools had been founded.

The second volume depicts the development after World War II, now limited to Europe. Schools are portrayed within their countries. Thus, 39 countries are included, their depictions reaching into the present time.

The third volume views non-European schools: North America, South America, Australia and New Zealand, Africa, Asia, and China.

This volume ends with a chapter on the international collaboration within the school

movement since the Second World War. Volume I comprises more than 450 pages; Volumes II and III are more than 800 pages each. All three volumes are exceptionally well-illustrated.

## **Content and Style**

In her foreword, Nana Göbel states that in view of the extent of this project and the density of facts, readers will encounter a difficult style. She claims that her research led to something like a reference book. This does not correspond with my reading experience; the content flows convincingly, captivatingly, and thus truly enthralling. Actually, everything is related as though it were a larger-than-life novel by Tolstoy. In other words, facts are not presented merely for their own sake, they always give meaning to the context. The style is objectively factual, without the author's interpretation, which allows the facts to speak for themselves. (With, however, small exceptions here and there. In describing how the National Socialists slowly strangled the Hamburg school, she comments, "Even such actions were carried out with German thoroughness.") (Vol. 1, p. 247)

Regarding the given contents, it has to be said that how a single human being was able to research, remember and archive such a vast quantity of dates, names, facts and connections borders on the impossible. And this worldwide! In her foreword she modestly says that her work was made possible by the 'Friends of the Art of Education'. That is just

one part of the story. The other is her love for the project itself, and her exceptional ability to grasp and keep track of things, facts, names, events and incidents. She simply indicates situations which might be illuminated critically, allowing the reader to judge them as he chooses. Everything she portrays comes alive in the light of her love for the Waldorf school movement and she has succeeded in her intention: she gave the world wide Waldorf movement a memory, which anyone can read.

### ... and its People

As is well known, brilliance is simple. And what is simple and brilliant here is the title: Thousands of people, teachers, founders of schools, and those who inspired this movement become visible (again). They are liberated from anonymity and recognized as those working for the art of education. Their names appear, they appear in shorter or longer scenes depicting their actions and involvement. It is as if the school movement has awakened: all its deeds, wherever in the world they took place, are now connected to people and live through one consciousness. This consciousness has enabled it to revive in every consciousness through reading. The Waldorf movement can come to life, arise inwardly, and the one hundred years become visible at the hand of the given destinies.

Looked at karmically, one might say that through these portrayals, the community which determined to bring a truly human means of education to earth becomes visible, and this through three generations.

This gift for us is incomparable in breadth and meaning. It is a gift for the Waldorf colleagues now standing at the brink of the second hundred years.

And each of us knows that we stand not just at a brink, but also at a threshold: Will we suc-

ceed in the future? These three books constitute a mighty aid toward such success, for they show us how preceding generations did it.

### What Did These Colleagues Do?

No matter which volume you open, the stories are all gripping. Human destinies and the destiny of the art of education intermingle:

- Who knew that in Portugal Waldorf methods would have been introduced in all elementary schools in 1980, but for tragic accidents within the government two days after the decision was made? (Vol. 2, p. 439)
- Who knew that the first kindergarten teacher in Italy, Mrs. Pederiva, was the daughter of Mrs. Auguste Arenson and Carl Unger? (She died in 2016.)
- Who knows that the Waldorf School in Colmar is called Matthias Grünewald School, and that one of the school's co-founders was Else Zimmer, one of the original Uhlandshöhe pupils? (Vol. 2, p. 348)
- Who knew that in 2008 Tobias Richter, along with Professor Basic, organized courses at the University of Zagreb which even then led to an MA in Waldorf pedagogy? (Vol. 2, p. 620)
- Who knew how astonishingly modern Armenia's newly passed educational law already was, as early as September 11, 1918, in the sense of the three-fold social order? (Vol. 2, p. 699)
- Who knew that as early as 1926 there was a Waldorf School in Budapest? This story alone reads like a novella.
- And how often is our historical consciousness so horrifyingly "lame," forget-



ting as it does how mightily and frequently the anthroposophical movement and the school movement were attacked, for example, the massive attack by the Secret Service and Ministries in France in 1999 to sustain and solidify the 1982 charges of sectarianism? It reads like a crime thriller. (Vol. 2. p. 363)

- And let us not lose awareness of how the English school movement failed, after many procedures and attempts to become economically viable? The country in which Steiner so enjoyed speaking about pedagogy, and where, during his visits on the islands, so much hope was generated. And we review names: Brian Masters, Francis Edmunds, John Davy, Ron Jarman, Martyn Rawson, Christopher Clouder, John Burnett, Shirley Noakes, and the astonishing character, Charles Kovacs, whose main lesson research is still in print .... (Vol. 2. pp 181-209)

The further back we go in time, the less bourgeois and more will-based the colleagues become; they seemed uninterested in economic niceties. What counted was the development of this pedagogy and in German lands, its reconstruction.

Of course, these books use a linear chronology, the course of time necessitates that. All the more satisfying then, when cross references become visible and the reader can experience something like a historical *Gestalt*.

So, for example, in Volume I we have extensive descriptions of how Steiner was able to speak in Great Britain; which people invested in a new form of education (Prof. Millicent Mackenzie); and about the universities which invited Steiner. In Volume II, then, we already have the basis of a description of England. (Volume I, p. 78) Thus the aforementioned

Auguste (Arenson) Unger has already appeared in Volume I as she helps Caroline von Heydebrand feed children weakened by World War I (Volume I, page 175).

In the significant chapter on the international cooperation after the Second World War, in Volume III, the personage of Ernst Weissert reappears again, this time in relation to the founding of the Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners (1976) – but we already encountered him in 1921 (!) where, in Volume I, we find the description of the autonomous, self-administered teacher training, the so-called, "Jena-Zwätzener Pedagogical Working Group."

Such cross references show once again, that it was not only time which ran its course, but that extensive human impact came to earth from pre-birth intentions in order to realize this achievement of a truly human education for our time.

It is a fact that Nana Göbel has given the worldwide Waldorf movement its memory. May many, also the "new" 4<sup>th</sup> generation of Waldorf teachers, heed it and take it to heart.

This is a trilogy which should not fail to be present in every faculty library; indeed, in the library of every Waldorf teacher or Waldorf educator.

## The Meetings of the International Forum of the Waldorf Movement from a Personal Perspective

*Robert Thomas*

*Translated by John Weedon*

It was in May 1991 that I was able to participate in a meeting of the International Forum in The Hague for the first time. I was enabled to be there in The Hague through the recommendations of W. Spalinger, (Zürich), the departing Swiss colleague, Otfried Dörfler, (Basel), and Jörgen Smit, the leader of the Section at the time. The meetings alternated then between The Hague (May) and Stuttgart (November) each year; looking back on it, for me the meeting was something exclusive, perhaps even elitist, but, above all, also something enriching, living and spiritual. Well-known personalities of the school movement gathered there, every one of whom were experienced, leading educators from Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Austria and France. They were influential and heavily involved in the building up of the Waldorf movement after the Second World War. These people radiated interest in the world, competence as teachers and a strong sense of responsibility. They were clearly bearers of the impulse of anthroposophy and of the fields of educational work within it. The last witnesses of this period for me are Jörgen Smit, Stefan Leber, Ernst-Michael Cranich, Heinz Zimmermann, Wim Veltmann, Guus van Dam and Walter Liebendörfer. What this generation has contributed to the understanding of the world school movement is hard to evaluate, but through them a quality standard was set that even today counts as a point of reference for the continuity of this sense of responsibility that is being striven for.

### **A Picture of the World Arises**

Today this Forum has become more international: more than 30 countries are represented. It is no longer a matter of a Eurocentric perspective, but rather of a qualitative broadening of our viewpoint. The Forum contributes towards a clearer perception and understanding of the present world situation from the viewpoints of various cultures. In my opinion this is a salutary learning process for us Western Europeans. We are called upon to review and critically scrutinize conceptions and habits no longer relevant to our times (curriculum, pedagogical characteristics of another era, dogmas, inessential criteria, foreign language standards). It stands out clearly that living conditions of teaching in schools in Asia, in the Middle East, in Africa and South America are completely different from the way we imagine them as Europeans. Schools and kindergartens find themselves practically everywhere more or less in a debate, in which it is a matter of educational policy issues, economic survival, qualifications and putting school life and health care on a scientific basis, but also a matter of the area of conflict between central government regulation and the forming of identity. Through the actual human encounters and the sustained exchange of ideas among working teachers no uniform picture of the Waldorf movement emerges, but rather an individualised, differentiated view of reality. Thus, we get a lively impression of our international educational movement.

### Perceiving the Phenomena of our Times

When Dutch colleagues report on the teaching challenges of Waldorf education (independent schools) in the corset of countless state regulations (testing, administration by outsiders, etc.), when the lawmakers want to end the long-standing exceptional position of these independent schools, all colleagues' ears prick up, as this trend is perceived not as a Dutch (or European) one-off phenomenon, but as a potentially imminent problem for all concerned. The story of this re-structuring is a lesson for everyone involved. The danger of the suffocation of our breathing spaces through standardisation (ratings, politics and economics) is a reality which is lurking everywhere in many and various guises. These kinds of contemporary phenomena speak a clear message: regulation, subjection to external laws, convention, social and educational work subjected to scientific analysis and mistrust towards the efforts of individual initiative. In the Ukraine the Waldorf school needs to be organised and subordinated differently from the school in Switzerland, for example. The conversation of teachers and educators about these developing processes creates clarity of mind; at the same time, it allows a better evaluation and assessment of one's own situation. When we are rowing against the stream, the mainstream, it is important to know the currents at work so as to be able to anticipate and react more effectively. This is not simply a matter of an uphill struggle; within it lies the possibility of developing capacities that would otherwise not have come about. Through this work the identity of the autonomous schools is strengthened; it allows us to understand the task of Waldorf education – unfolding the individuality of the human being on the levels of body, soul and spirit – more profoundly and more consciously as one of the highest forms of good in society.

### A Place of Initiative

The Hague Circle was always a source of initiatives: in 1983 Jürgen Smit with The Hague Circle held the first world teachers' and educators' conference. To date, regular conferences have been taking place, attended each time by more than 1,000 Waldorf teachers and educators. In April 2016 this conference took place for the tenth time. Each time the content is prepared by the Education Section at the Goetheanum and the International Forum (IK or IF) years in advance. These international events of the Waldorf movement are meeting places and have a real potential for further professional development.

In crisis situations too the IF (International Forum) has been involved time and again in order, for instance, to lend more weight to the interests of the Waldorf schools vis-à-vis restrictive national authorities. In certain situations, the outsider view is invaluable. The international composition of the IF meetings offers the opportunity for encountering various viewpoints and kinds of experience: a real vessel for educational competence and intuitions.

In 2011 this body decided to be registered as an association according to Swiss law, which meant that a 'legal entity', embodying the world-wide school movement, has been created. This organ of perception thereby strives to take on more responsibility in the process of increasing internationalisation. What the "Bund" (Association in Germany) of Waldorf Schools has been achieving for decades (and is still achieving) for the world-wide school movement is impressive, but today we require a more broad-based, supporting, responsible body, in keeping with our times. The IF is on the point of taking on this task.

Through the bi-annual encounters of the members, valuable, personal conversations that are very stimulating in a small framework,

arise. In Switzerland, for instance, various reports on the world-wide school movement for the parents and staff have appeared, enabling a connection to be made to education across the world.

### **Improving our Attentiveness**

When, over the years, people from about 30 countries and cultural traditions meet twice a year in order to gain a wider picture, a new kind of connection with one's colleagues arises that has an impact that goes beyond countries and continents. Putting yourself into totally foreign situations is demanding and requires a special kind of attentiveness and care; clichés and prejudices need to be overcome time and again. The danger of having an authority to point the way is relativized by the many and varied viewpoints and the endeavour to distinguish essentials from side issues. Nowadays this faculty is very much called for. Impartiality is essential, if we want to understand the world. Identity is not something fixed, definitive; identity is much rather a process. The example of the small independent Waldorf school of Montreal in Canada (founded in 1980) shows how committed teachers and parents struggle with the identity of their school. Decades ago, this school was a French-speaking establishment in Quebec, which particularly spoke to the strong French minority in the surrounding Anglo-Saxon area; today the Anglo-Saxon element has become stronger and the French minority has become weaker. The school needs to take account of that. It needs to include this change culturally and linguistically in its work, since English-speaking parents are looking for this kind of education in Montreal. Social skills of teaching and setting a direction are required, if the school wants to carry on fulfilling its task.

### **Complexity and Challenges**

In South Africa, for example, the situation of Waldorf schools is challenging. This country

is still suffering from the effects of Apartheid. During the 1960s Waldorf schools were forward-looking places; they fought against the political stream, as much as was possible. Today they are still carrying out pioneer work in the townships of Johannesburg and Cape Town for children from four different types of social backgrounds: black people (80% of the population, white people (9%), coloured and Asian people; moreover, there are several million refugees, above all, from Zimbabwe, living illegally in South Africa. Key tasks are health care and education. Children are striving to gain the basic skills of civilisation (writing, reading, arithmetic and acquiring knowledge), but they are also striving for spiritual dimensions and assistance in finding a direction. Since the end of Apartheid, South Africa has had eleven official languages: English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, Siswati, South-Ndebele, Sesotho, Sepedi, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, and isiXhosa. Thus, after Bolivia and India this country comes third in having the most official languages in the world. Accordingly, there are eleven different official names for the country, which is a challenge for a school and the education of children and adolescents that we, in Europe, cannot conceive of as yet; nonetheless, a challenge that we will perhaps have to get to grips with in Europe through the great stream of refugees at present.

Meeting adolescents of a twelfth class in Harduf (Israel) turned out to be a special experience for me. These young people have reached the end of their school time and very soon will have to do their dangerous military service. How they assess this, analyse it coolly, view it lucidly and accept it shows the great maturity of these 18-year olds as human beings; in all this the spiritual dimension of their sense of responsibility, whether Arabic, Jewish or Christian, is impressive.

Does the strongly artistic tendency of the Waldorf schools in Harduf possibly have anything to do with it? There are numerous other examples that show how this social pedagogical impulse radiates out into the world. In recent years digitalisation has taken over the sphere of education world-wide; behind this lies a business model and a specific intention in educational policy. This newly-created societal context demands an appropriately differentiated pedagogical response; this is why the Prague Manifesto of 2018 was published as the position of the International Forum; various initiatives have been working for years on a curriculum that takes digitalisation into account.

Waldorf 100 as a world-wide, over-arching event demonstrates the surplus forces of the movement through numerous individual events; what has touched me most is the Bienen-Lehrplan (Bee-Curriculum) (Kindergarten to Class 12).

### **Extending Conscious Awareness**

The IF has gained a great deal from the contributions of the "Friends of the Art of Education". Through close contact, the 'Friends' know the situations of numerous Waldorf institutions, schools and kindergartens, which they support financially and with advice. The co-ordination of the various insights gained has a stimulating effect on the work, whereby a key role is given to the leadership of the Education Section; it leads the meetings and sets the priorities. It frequently becomes aware of the challenges itself on the spot in various countries and seeks connections and possibilities for defusing situations and strengthening impulses.

Through the regular updating of the world-wide list of schools, it is evident how the school movement is developing throughout the world. There are establishments which

feel themselves to be Waldorf schools. In these cases, it has to be clarified whether this feeling corresponds to reality. To enable this, the IF characteristics of a Waldorf school, among other things, were thoroughly debated and agreed upon in order to create reliable orientation.

### **The Question of Protection**

The necessity of protection has grown in the age of anonymity, of the internet and of the levelling of discourse to the lowest common denominator. The Association of Independent Waldorf Schools (Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen) is the owner of the proprietary names "Waldorf" and "Rudolf Steiner" historically and legally. For countries without a national association a procedure has been developed by the Association and the International Forum in order to provide a guarantee of recognition; thereby pseudo-Waldorf schools or copycats with commercial ambitions have been excluded. Nowadays it is no longer in keeping with our times to leave the sole responsibility up to the Association of Independent Waldorf Schools; for this reason, the possibility of sub-licensing was created: countries which have a national association may apply to take on the legal responsibility. A procedure makes clear what the necessary pre-requirements are.

### **The Question of Responsibility**

If we look at the development over the years, the question arises today as to how the international work can be structured for it to be alive, de-centralised and federal. How do we want to serve this development? Where should clear protective boundaries be? How are the "breathing spaces" being defended? How do we penetrate the impulse? How do we accompany the further steps in a lucid way between imposing a structure and arbitrary decision-making? How are spirituality and education connected in secular and religious societies? To

what extent are adaptation and identity consistent with one another?

According to Jean Gebser's view, in our time what is occurring is "the breakthrough of a new stage of consciousness: integral consciousness". Through the social-pedagogical impulse of Rudolf Steiner this consciousness

quality is comprehensible and realisable. Is the International Forum not an appropriate platform to strive for this and carry it out? Of course, time and again, in the International Forum it is a matter of organisation, concrete projects, agreements and commitments; nonetheless, just the connection between the concrete and the global is the essential task.

## A post-card from Edinburgh, May 2019

Trevor Mephram

Half a million people live in *Edinburgh*. It's a city which probably began life as a hill-fort over a thousand years ago. A town developed next to the hill-fort and was proclaimed by royal charter in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. By the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Edinburgh was being described as the capital of a place called Scotland.

Was *Ernst Schumacher* visiting *Edinburgh* when he chose the title for his book, *Small Is Beautiful*? Probably not, but it is! Nestling between the churning North Sea, rolling hills, a sleeping volcano and forested slopes, *Edinburgh* interrupts nature in a very gentle manner.

Thirty of us came to Bonny Scotland from Africa, North and South America, Russia, China, the Holy Land and all corners of Europe. This meeting of the *International Forum* overcame any temptation to follow a simple or false binary, meaning it was a gathering that was both sombre and joyful; troubling and invigorating.

The weather was, for Scotland in May, just right. 14 degrees centigrade, soft rain, the sky laden with grey and white clouds with occasional, promising splashes of blue sky and pale sunlight.

The four-day gathering opened with a Dutch nursery rhyme:  
*White swans, black swans,  
Will you sail to England with me?  
England is closed because the key has broken.  
Is there no key-maker in the land,  
Who can fix the key?*

We were, of course, not in England, but where were we? In 2019 do even the citizens know?

We came to a place where many people gather from all over the world; a nation within an island-nation, within a patchwork of kingdoms and realms, some of which were, some are and others that might be.

What did we hear? It is tempting, I know, dear reader, to imagine bag-pipes and an airy highland reel welcoming us to the land of the Gaels. Yet, the opening treat was both a surprise and a delight: an *Impromptu* by *Schubert* performed effortlessly and brilliantly by a Grade 12 student in wellingtons. What else did we hear about?

- Steiner's visits to these islands and the wide-ranging talks he gave on education and spiritual science. He made his first visit in the spring of 1913 and his final visit was in the late summer of 1924. While in *Penmaenmawr*, in the mountains of north Wales, he is reported to have said that he felt "*at home*".
- The 80 years of life and activity of the *Edinburgh Steiner School*, which opened in 1939, as schools in Germany were being shut down as an extended wave of terror swept across Europe. Before this, from 1922, Steiner had been in discussion with a small group of women about their aim to begin educational activity in *Kings Langley*. Three years later, in 1925, the first Steiner school in the UK opened in London.

- The current state of low ebb in the Steiner Waldorf movement in the UK, where outer pressures and challenges vie with internal differences and tribulations concerned with organisational fluency and leadership. These times are particularly difficult for schools in England, where a combination of austerity, tightening regulation and a series of poor judgements arising out of a wave of school inspection visits have produced low morale and a state of crisis. Fragmentation is, arguably, a dynamic in the country at large, as well as within the Steiner Waldorf movement. The key question facing SWSF is whether consent for an organisation that can lead and govern can be re-newed, or whether we have reached a place where the signposts to the future come in the form of a series of positive, individual initiatives. In every challenge, opportunity springs up and like the pearl in the oyster, opportunity is something new which can lie hidden, or un-noticed. To be able to grasp opportunities that are thrown up by setbacks and disruption, we need hope, alertness and courage.
- The celebrations for 100 years of Waldorf education are gathering pace and are full of verve and energy. Upbeat reports and feedback were received from a string of conferences held recently in Nairobi, Bangkok, Taiwan and Switzerland.
- Through much of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a wide-spread call for people to be free; a climate of liberal universalism is one way to describe it. The Berlin Wall crumbled in 1989; now a gen-

eration away. Today, walls are being built around the world and fear and instability are at large. With the turn of the century, the call for freedom quietened somewhat and a new call for equality can now be heard. Some of the instruments in the equality 'tool-kit' need to be watched and handled with care. The prominence in the global economic, civic and social agenda of standards has led to a culture of standardisation, which can tilt effortlessly into a culture of uniformity. If this phenomenon, trend and danger are not understood clearly and appropriate responses made, the doors to the forces of authoritarianism swing open.

The meeting ended by looking ahead to the next World Teachers' Conference in 2022. In seeking for a theme or leitmotif, the fast-developing conditions of modern life, medical-technical possibilities of change and fundamental questions of purpose and ethics ring out loud and clear. Is the time approaching when it will not sound strange to ask such things as: *"What is the point of a human being having a body?"* or, *"How can we access the wisdom of the body consciously?"* and, *"What are the actual relationships between the brain, the heart and the limbs and how do we support and serve the whole human being?"*

The next meeting of the *International Forum* takes place in Berlin, in September. We will gather together to listen again for *"the heart's cosmic pulse"*; to share our times and our places and to refresh our commitment to the children of the world – their health, security and their learning.



## 'Let's work on our Weaknesses' Edinburgh, 30 May – 2 June 2019

*Robert Thomas for the International Forum  
Translated with [www.DeepL.com/Translator](http://www.DeepL.com/Translator)*

The International Forum of Waldorf/Steiner Schools took note of the dramatic situation of Steiner schools in Great Britain with great concern and seriousness: school closures, social tensions, excessive demands, disorientation, powerlessness. The numerous reports and differentiated analyses of the problems at the various levels (school, fellowship, political situation) expressed the difficult conditions: political pressure on the schools from outside combined with clearly perceptible inner weaknesses. Instead of acting proactively and fighting against the inertia of habits, the educational movement has come to a standstill in many places.

It is obvious that schools with very few resources and completely on their own are at the mercy of political and administrative pressure. Unfortunately, it has become a fact that several schools have been closed and others may follow.

But what is happening in Great Britain today is latently present in all countries of the world. With few exceptions since the 1990s – for very specific ideological reasons – the states are increasingly exercising strict controls on the school system and administering education with instruments of the economy (the economization of education).

But the relevant question for us is: What can we learn from this specific situation in Britain?

These internal weaknesses are present everywhere, but it is the area in which we can act

immediately; here we are actually quite free. Honesty and courage are essential here. The will to make changes, to question traditions, to promote independent initiatives and to lead social processes efficiently, will shape the existence of our movement in the coming years in such a way that either the source of spiritual science will enable us to make this radical "conversion" or the weaknesses will suffocate us; an energetic effort at this source is inevitable, if children and young people, who will change the world of tomorrow, are to find an art of education on earth; it is about the salvation of the soul-spiritual in humans.

What our colleagues have taught us is, on the one hand, the merciless recognition of our own weakness (diagnosis + appropriate measures) and on the other hand, to combine social processes (within the college, with parents ...) with clear and professional guidance. This has become vital in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in self-governing institutions and guarantees the creation of pedagogical freedom.

In the age of the consciousness soul the task is to find a new form of trust; no longer the mind is decisive, but rather a conscious, serving competence which is carried by warmth and empathy.

May the present situation in the land of Shakespeare awaken us all to personally face the urgent challenges of our time. In order to do this, each of us cannot remain the leopard, which cannot change its spots.

## Discourse Concerning Healthy Childhood

### Screens & Digital Devices – Navigating the Waves of Technology for a Healthy Childhood

*Written and worked out by the International Forum*

Digital technologies are a part of modern life and deserve an appropriate place in education – both for teaching and for learning. Children develop their capacities to experience the world in successive, developmental stages – tactile, sensual, emotional, social, and cognitive. Accordingly, answers to the questions, "When?" and "How?" to learn about and use digital forms of media are crucial to the unfolding of a healthy childhood. Neither the naive use of digital technologies, nor a defensive rejection of them can lead to skilful and appropriate applications. What is needed is a holistic approach that leads the way from concrete, primary experiences of the world (sensory, motoric, and rhythmic activity) through a familiarity with a range of diverse sensually media (picture-books, printed text, handwriting, theatre, etc.) to an understanding of digital technologies as tools for learning.

Waldorf Education recognizes that these tools are intended to enhance particular human skills, but that it takes time to first develop these human skills. The more advanced a skill, the more one can take advantage of a device designed to enhance that skill. To the degree one is fluent in mathematical operations, for instance, a calculating device can be of immense help. The mischief begins when the calculator is introduced before the mathematical skill is developed, for now the calculator will threaten to replace a skill rather than support it.

In the case of digital devices – computers, tablets, smart phones, and the like – the skills they are intended to support are the cognitive functions of conscious human experience. These devices in effect simulate these functions. That means human capacities can be enhanced and benefit by using these devices. But the rule still applies: first develop the skill and only then use the appropriate tool to enhance that skill.

In this light, the fundamental question regarding the use of digital technology in education must be: How do we develop the full palette of human experience so that digital technology can enhance rather than supplant it? In an attempt to contribute to the discourse around this question, the International Forum (Hague Circle) has drafted the following 10 principles towards a "Healthy Childhood in an Age of Digital Technology":

1. Children learn best from direct contact with people.
2. Children learn differently at different stages of their development.
3. Children need to move if they are to learn. The younger the child, the greater the need to be active and practically engaged.
4. The development of gross motor skills precedes and enhances the development of fine motor skills.

5. Children should complete, in large measure, the physical development of their perceptual or sense organs before these are applied to digital devices.
6. Unscripted, child-initiated play is the most productive work of childhood, enabling children to develop their imaginations by exploring and experiencing the world around them.
7. As young learners begin to gain access to digital, screen-based technologies, it is vital that adults ensure children and young people are safe in the online world and that children learn to use these technologies with care and responsibility. Human powers of objective perception, discernment and thinking – which constitute the basis for freedom and responsibility – need time and space to mature.
8. Children need first to develop life skills since they form the basis for acquiring digital, screen-based skills.
9. Education must be guided by pedagogical values, rather than by economic or political interests.
10. Learning is more about developing human capacities than about accumulating and retaining information.

## Agenda

2019

September 19

Closing Ceremonies Waldorf 100 in the Tempodrom, Berlin

October 26 – 29

Interdisciplinary advanced training in education and medicine for teachers, support teachers and school physicians with the following theme 'Supporting Learning as the Interaction of Soul and Physical forces'

November 15 – 17

3<sup>rd</sup> School of Spiritual Science Conference of the Pedagogical Section 'The Will as Transformative Pedagogical Power'

For Notices

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