

## General Secretary Report from Dornach, Spring 2022

A bridge across time zones, hemispheres, seasons and cultures.

My trip to Dornach was quite a journey, there was 23 hours of flight time and a further 13 hours in airports lounges each way. I experienced travelling as a physical and soul exercise, a challenge to stay inward and while maintaining my equanimity and my trust in the travel experience. I put aside any feelings of 'flight shame', 'flygskam' - a term founded in 2018 in Sweden, which means an 'uneasiness over engaging in consumption that is energy-intense and climatically problematic'.

I arrived in Dornach on a warm sunny autumn afternoon. The Swiss skies were clear pale blue and streaked with the white condensation trails, signalling the flight paths of the many daily planes. Nature was lush but wanning toward winter, the elemental beings moving inward to the cooling earth was evident in the deciduous landscape and in the air. I last visited the Goetheanum 12 years ago, and I was again filled with wonder to be entering the building and surroundings.

The Goetheanum, adorns the hill in Dornach, the land was gifted to Steiner by a local farmer. It stands as a 'university of thinking' and an enduring statement to the revelation of Anthroposophy. Visitors come daily, not only Anthroposophists with a purpose to connect, but curious tourists, architecture students, families, the young and old from across the world. It is normal to hear children laughing and playing, dogs barking and alpine grey cattle calling/ mooing amid the melodic bells of the nearby town.

This was my first visit as General Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in Australia, and I was pondering personal questions such as: How can I do justice as a country representative to more than 600 Australian members, whose eleven branches span more than seven and a half million square kilometres? Do I have the capacity to be in this spiritual scientific conversation? My language is English not German which is the language through which Rudolf Steiner had been able to bring Anthroposophy to the world. I found Anthroposophical concepts for the first time in this life in my early 30s. I did not have the intergenerational privilege of many either through a Waldorf education or family connections. Was I worthy? But I was greeted by my peers with profound warmth and welcome, a living active reception allayed my concerns about being a co-contributor to a world conversation.

Each day started with Eurythmy with Stefan Hasler, the social exercises of periphery and centre enhanced connectedness of the group and enlivened the bodily sheaths. The meetings were held in the conference room with a table set for 35 people. The walls were adorned with seven large artworks depicting the 'planetary seals' that indicate the forces that resonate within us from the living solar system. According to Steiner, these seals are " .. occult scripts, meaning that as hidden signatures, they show their ongoing etheric impacts on the seven stages of our metabolism." The planetary seals were also carved into seven wooden columns for the first Goetheanum, which was destroyed by fire almost 100 years ago,

Our meetings began with introductions of the 27 general secretaries or country representatives present with the executive council, and the section leaders. Many had not met before; many had not been able to travel for many years and apologies for absence came from some for whom economic or political circumstances or the sheer physical distance remains a barrier for travel.

The Russian representative gave his apologies and thanked the group for their continuous correspondence and meditative work. We heard that bordering town to Ukraine and Russia continue to engage in peaceful community activities and Anthroposophical studies together. The Polish rep spoke of the experience of 6,000,000 refugees who had passed through their country and how they were able to welcome and accommodate, to integrate more than 3,000,000 of them into the Polish community.

We all shared contributions on the world situations from different countries, many common challenges were revealed, and our 'golden thread' is our earthly search for the relationship of the human being to

the cosmos and to each other. I experienced the meetings as bridging conversations, inclusive and inquiring in their nature.

In the meetings there were reports from the working research groups of the country representatives. One topic being the recognition and contribution of issue of *cultural diversity* in the world society, discussing the commonality but also unique cultural expression of spiritual science.

Another topic is *language*, considering the influence of different languages in the life of anthroposophy, world language and whether it occurs as inclusive or dividing, does it engender apathy of sympathy in the listener?

Another topic was the intent to have the country representatives be recognised as a valid, consultative organ of the GAS and how it could be enshrined in the Statutes. This would recognise the many years of constructive dialogue and research across the world.

Research development perspectives from the School of Spiritual Science were shared and discussed and can be found on the Goetheanum website under the different sections. These contemporary ideas were warmly welcomed by the meeting participants, and we heard that they are only really restricted by limited funding available. Topics include- Transhumanism and the counter forces of new Arts, The Waldorf curriculum for building resilience.

The country representatives are asked to take the task of *membership development* to their country as a priority topic. I am particularly interested in our Anthroposophical Society being welcoming, visible and in enabling the right forms for people to enter. Also enabling connection with the Goetheanum activity and task for the members in Australia.

The opportunities arising as we acknowledge the 100 year anniversaries of the varied rich anthroposophical earthly beginnings brought to us by Steiner through the questions that came to him, provides opportunity, in a world context, not just for one but for all humanity.

The 2024 Goetheanum World Conference was discussed, and we were asked to contribute to the theme content. An opportunity for the country representatives to support the conference and contribute actively to the afternoon working groups. Early registration and the survey are online. Dates are 27.9. to 1.10. 2023. <https://goetheanum.world/>

On our final evening together, we were hosted for dinner by the Youth Section and friends. Their building lies at the beginning of the driveway to the Goetheanum, from their prime position they watch the comings and goings, and it gave me the impression they were 'keepers of the gate'. The youth are part of conversations within all the Sections and have particularly been contributing to the work of the agricultural section. Their creativity and their lively conversations about world affairs and the 'meaning of life' was refreshing and engendered trust in us all toward this new generation and for the future.

Now, back at home in Tasmania, the spring weather bring unpredictability and change, the southern winds blow cold, and the northern winds bring the warmth, the inward turns outward to face the cosmos in the cycle of earthly life.

I endeavour recognise the fruits of my visit and build on them.

**Jane Bradshaw, General Secretary for the ASinA  
November 2022.**

*'We are firmly grounded in our understanding of things of the spirit only when we do not rest content with abstract spiritual concepts and a capacity to express them theoretically, but instead grow into a sure belief that higher beings are present with us in a community of spirit when we engage in spiritual study.'*

*-Rudolf Steiner, Awakening to Community*

