



Rosicrucian Aspects of Economic Life

ECONOMICS CONFERENCE
Report of the 10th Annual Meeting

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Report of the 10th Annual Meeting

This meeting was held at L'Aubier, Montézillon (Neuchâtel), Swtzerland, 28 September – 1 October, 2011.

Introductory Background

The themes and location of this year's Economics Conference were chosen to commemorate the 100th anniversary of lectures given by Rudolf Steiner on Christian Rosenkreutz in Neuchatel, Switzerland on September 27 and 28, 1911. The conference was preceded by a lecture by Marc Desaulles at the Museum of Art and History in Neuchatel. Against a backdrop of the three great paintings of Paul Robert¹, Marc reminded us that Steiner had surely been in that very room 100 years before. Evoking an image of the spiritual world working on behalf of humanity, he spoke about the evolution of initiation and how Steiner described that a new initiation path was needed when human beings had lost access to spiritual knowledge; humanity was at risk of falling prey both to deception and to alienation. The gods' response to these conditions was a three-step process to establish a new initiation path based on developing *understanding* as a prerequisite for discerning truth.

First, in the middle of the 13th century, a great being was prepared who would become the bearer of all the world's wisdom such that, in his incarnation in the 14th century as Christian Rosenkreutz, he brought with him the foundation of a new Christianity and the possibility for all future initiations. Through the strength of his spiritual forces, pupils of Christian Rosenkreutz performed alchemical experiments that defied natural laws and led them to recognize spiritual phenomena within themselves. The work of these Rosicrucians revealed that moral substance resulted from the harmonious interplay between thinking and willing and brought about a second element of initiation – truth in doing. Regarding the third element – to protect humanity from permanent separation – Steiner describes that because of certain spiritual events since Christ came to Earth, humanity was at risk of becoming divided into one group that would not incarnate into matter and the other that would be trapped in materialism. The gods responded, in order to mitigate the risk for incoming souls, with a cosmic influence which would thenceforward cohere the opposing forces of compassion and war. Because Steiner perceived a narrow window for humanity to escape the risk of perpetual alienation on Earth, he took it upon himself, as an Initiate, to provide modern life with an instrument for initiation that would forever instruct humanity in the ways of cohering rather than separating. Just as the gods had done, so Steiner brought two streams together on Earth when he re-founded the Anthroposophical Society. In its structure can be found all the elements of a Rosicrucian path.

¹ Three giant paintings on the staircase walls. For more details, see: *Towards True Pricing and True Income, Proceedings of the 2009 Gathering of Economics Conference*, pp.36-38.

Rosicrucian Aspects of the Re-founded Anthroposophical Society – The Threefold Social Organism

We considered the re-founded Society as an organism – the body as the outer Society, the soul as the School of Spiritual Science, the spirit as Michael and the name of this Being as the Goetheanum. Throughout this structure, Steiner imprinted his genius in such a way that the tension between opposing streams is resolved – between form and freedom, between truth and doing. In the body (of statutes), there is an unquestionable obligation to membership dues matched by freedom in the way each group organizes itself to obtain them (Statute 12)². In the School of Spiritual Science, he again brought together the twin attributes of the Rosicrucian path in the vertical and the horizontal structure which offers a blueprint for modern initiation: the three classes exist for inner study according to each pupil's need and ability and the sections for activity in fields of endeavor. This is the threefold nature of social life, where two elements meet and lead to a third experience.

If a Rosicrucian path means doing what we know to be true,³ then did Steiner give indications of Rosicrucian aspects in economics? It was noted how an early reference by Steiner (1907) to accounting was in the context of karmic relationships, which also resonates with Aristotle's watchword, "a free man will give the right amount of money to the right person in the right way at the right time." Surely this exemplifies the principles of acting in accordance with one's truth? Steiner also refers to economic life when discussing the differentiation of language in connection with the three spheres of social life as they will appear in the 5th, 6th and 7th epochs. The part of language that does not express form but connects us through doing – i.e., when we use expressions such as 'eh?' and 'ah!' – is linked to economic life in that it is the quality of our inner intention that connects us through the way we act. Also worth noting here is the historical context in which Christopher Houghton Budd places the appearance of double entry bookkeeping. For long ages money represented a moral threat and so was kept subject to sacred and then ecclesiastical constraints. Double entry bookkeeping arose as the final way in which human beings can protect themselves from the propensity to lie which money brings with it and which is why its 'inventor', Luca Pacioli, was a friar!

During the Christmas Conference proceedings, Steiner made three significant comments about finance. The first concerned membership dues and unequivocally asserted a fixed commitment but freedom in the meeting of that commitment. Secondly, he boldly addressed the means for financing research and called upon the will of the members to address the urgency of the need, which, in 1924, he put at 50-75 million Swiss Francs! Thirdly, when asked by Van Leer about the efficacy of a worldwide association for channeling public support toward the Goetheanum, Steiner affirmed this and stated that as soon as the fruits of anthroposophy were visible, people would want to support the work attributed to them.

² *The Christmas Conference Proceedings of the General Anthroposophical Society 1923/1924*, Rudolf Steiner, Anthroposophic Press, 1990, p. 62.

³ While conference participants discussed varied details in defining a modern Rosicrucian path, this report assumes as its basis that a modern path of initiation, which includes what were termed 'Rosicrucian' aspects, involves experiencing two distinct realities simultaneously and out of this experience, one can have a third experience, namely a perception of spiritual reality.

Our Human Response

In research mode, several participants presented their visual images of expressions of action informed by truth were we to take Steiner at his word. These images suggested a threefold approach and a commitment to fully funding the Goetheanum by 2023 – 100 years after Steiner’s deed. First, coordination of national treasurers could foster accountability for membership dues and heighten economic efficiency. Secondly, capital reserves in worldwide anthroposophical foundations could be put in the pathway of research as a means not only of adequately funding research but also of acknowledging in action the problems that uncirculated capital⁴ creates in the world. Thirdly, a worldwide association could be created by each national society in concert with its treasurer for the public to support the work of the fruits from which it benefits. Several examples of this type of channel for funds were presented.⁵

⁴ In Steiner’s sense – capital that does not lose itself in personal credit.

⁵ <http://www.fondsgoetheanum.ch/en/home.html> and the Economics Conference Fund c/o Anthroposophical Society in America.