



Newsletter of the Economics Conference

Part of the Social
Sciences Section of the
School of Spiritual
Science

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Editor

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The aim of this publication is to encourage colleagues within the School of Spiritual Science to meet, share their work with one another, and where possible build a common culture in this field. It offers commentary, reports and news from a spiritual scientific point of view and provides a link between those who approach modern economic life in this way.

Associate does not proselytise or establish a 'party line' as regards the School of Spiritual Science and modern economic life. Responsibility for the views expressed, as also for their accuracy, rests solely with their authors.

Contributions should be as succinct as possible. Where appropriate, the editorial right is reserved to publish abstracts with a fuller version available on request. Contributors are asked to provide their name, profession and address.

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5th Annual Meeting

The 5th Annual Meeting of the Economics Conference took place 27th and 28th September at the Goetheanum. Attended by 35 people from around the world, its character was a little different this year in that it was based on three main contributions by Paul Mackay, Marc Desaulles and Christopher Houghton Budd. A full report has been published in *Anthroposophy Worldwide* in German and English, but if you would like a direct copy please get in touch.* The meeting was different also in two other regards - attendance by a wider group of people interested in Steiner's economics and preliminary discussions to widen the circle carrying this work, for example, in regard to themes, venues and dates.

Economics Conference in North America

From 29 January through 2 February, a weeklong intensive study of Steiner's economics lectures will take place just outside Los Angeles. This is being held under the joint auspices of the Economics Conference, the Social Sciences Section in North America and Associative Economics North America, a promotional vehicle being established by Pamela SophiaJohn. The gathering is for members of the School only and is already at its 'sold out' stage. The idea is to bring together those in North America who, in their different ways, represent Steiner's economics in the world.

Economics Conference in Britain

Regular monthly discussion evenings continue at Rudolf Steiner House, London. The current rubric, "Rudolf Steiner, Economist - the View from London", links Steiner's ideas to central problems of our time, such as the future of accounting, the role of the corporation and the deeper meaning of the financial markets. Based on a core of people, supplemented by others ranging from Green activists to 'financial people', this is a living way to sense how Steiner's ideas need to be expressed today so that they can be brought into public debates. 2007 will see a focus on the intensive work done in England in the 1930s by people such as Owen Barfield, Gordon Jones, Charles Waterman, Walter Johannes Stein and Daniel Dunlop.

Thailand, 29 April to 1 May 2007

Directly after the Asia-Pacific Anthroposophical Conference in Thailand there will be a workshop on Economics and Threefolding attended in part by Paul Mackay, Cornelius Pietzner and Christopher Houghton Budd. The meeting will not be restricted to School members only and "will include a session with business people who don't know about Anthroposophy." Details can be had from the organiser, Hans van Willenswaard (businessandsociety@suan-spirit.com), who would also like us to spread the word about this event.

Economics Conference and Agricultural Section

In the persons of Christopher Houghton Budd and Nicholai Fuchs, a two-day research seminar was held at Biogros, the biodynamic distributor in Luxembourg, to review in-depth both our understanding of Steiner's key ideas as regards the economics of farming and the way in which these ideas animate the work of Aender Schank and his colleagues. The focus question was how to reflect the idea of the farm as individuality in the wider reaches of economic life, especially as regards distribution, retailing and financing.

Meetings at the Goetheanum

Last year, under the theme "The Metamorphosis of Capitalism", six lectures and workshops were held with the aim of envisioning a bridge between the Goetheanum and the City of London, that is, between Steiner's Economics Course, given in 1922 in German, and today's, essentially Anglo-Saxon, paradigm, often so seemingly at odds with Steiner's ideas. In 2007 a second course is being planned, hopefully including two speakers each time and providing opportunities for in-depth research discussions. Deriving from areas of concern expressed by Economics Conference participants, the programme will be:

- 19/20 Jan Rudolf Steiner's Theory of Value – the way beyond Neo-Liberalism?
- 23/24 Feb Is True Pricing possible in Today's Circumstances?
- 23/24 Mar The Deeper Meaning of the Corporation
- 11/12 May Comparing Associative Economics and Market Economics
- 15/16 Jun Is an Association a Cartel?

Accounting Research

If Steiner had continued his lectures on economics, would he have touched the subject of accounting? In many places he makes parenthetical remarks concerning bookkeeping, so it is evident that he took this side of life very seriously. It is also said that he once asked for the books of an event that, in his view, underpaid him, adding on both sides the extra he thought was his due and a gift back from him for the same amount. Moreover, now that we face the imposition of universalised accounting standards which will probably have a cash-generation emphasis, what would associative accounting look like? This is the question that we should perhaps ask more and more in order both to ground our understanding of Steiner's economics and to find an overlap between his ideas and today's circumstances.

Thoughts Concerning German and English

This newsletter is produced in three languages in order to demonstrate the intention not to become locked into either German or English, but to find a way to discuss Steiner's ideas at a universal level. That said, the fact remains that there *is* a difference between German and English approaches to economics, as noted by Steiner in the first of his lectures on economics. One way to characterise this difference is that Germany tends to approach economic life from outside, from a rights life perspective, while the English favour whatever is conducive to trade, especially the idea of *laissez-faire* (which is a French term, of course!) Both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses, so how important it is to find ways to articulate and discuss this phenomenon.

A second consideration concerns the concept of Anglo-Saxon economics. This should not be made synonymous with the Anglo-American or English-

speaking peoples. It means rather the tendency, to which we are all prone, to accept plausible yet premature explanations of phenomena. This is the point, for example, of comparing Newton and Goethe and, for many, preferring the latter. And yet Newton also had an 'esoteric' side which he kept hidden, while Goethe provides a step towards but is not synonymous with spiritual science.

Account at Goetheanum

The work of the Economics Conference is supported by individuals and organisations. We would like to widen the number of contributors to this fund and to that end a specific account has been established at the Goetheanum. If you would like more information please get in touch.

Next Meeting

The provisional dates for the 6th Annual Meeting at the Goetheanum are 20th / 21st September 2007.

New Participants

Josiana Arripol (Sao Paulo, Brazil)
Joaquin Castro (Madrid, Spain)
Susan Gravelle, (East Troy, USA)
Franz Helbig (San Francisco, USA)
Joan Mele (Barcelona, Spain)
Ralf Neff (Berlin, Germany)
Stan Whipple (San Francisco, USA)
Douglas Wylie (Toronto, Canada)

Networking

In order to keep things as simple as possible, the Economics Conference is administered through its email address. However, Arthur Edwards (UK) writes: "For those who want to further an understanding of Steiner's economics, this surely requires regular exchange - beyond the annual meeting in Dornach. 'Associate' offers one way of doing this, but I feel there is also a need for ongoing virtual exchange between members of the Economics Conference so they can critique one another's papers prior to publication, for example, and collaborate more closely on specific projects such as developing a financial literacy course for schools, my special interest, or clarify the finer aspects of Steiner's thinking. Alongside the occasional issue of 'Associate', therefore, I would like to offer a managed electronic exchange specifically for Economics Conference members only. This could be something that, when joining the Conference, one opted into. If you would like to be a part of this, please let me know - arthur@talkingeconomics.com"

* For all enquiries and comments, please write to economics@goetheanum.org.