



Economics Conference of the Goetheanum

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

Newsletter | June 2012

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Dear Colleagues,

for several years now, this newsletter has served as a medium for enabling a community to find and express itself. A recent flurry of emails sent to me as convenor, as well as questions put to me around the world, all point to the same question: Is this community now strong, clear and real enough to take a next step? And if so, what is the next step, or steps?

This issue is devoted to this question. As usual, it is written under my hand, but the contents aim to be a synthesis of many conversations with many colleagues, as well as the ideas we have shared. Amendments, additions, corrections and comments are always welcome.

Best wishes,

Christopher Houghton Budd

New Members

Welcome to the following new members: Calin Saftoiu (Timisoara, Romania); Catalina Saftoiu (Timisoara, Romania); Patrick O'Meara (Washington DC, USA); Lucia Sigolo (Sao Paulo, Brazil); Marco Bertalot (Botucatu, Brazil); Ileana Toma (Bucharest, Romania).

Reconnecting the Money and the Goods Markets

11th Annual Meeting, 21 to 24 September 2012

Concerning this topic, the question is what can be done in practice in today's circumstances, and what are we doing in our own movement? There will be a report on the series of meetings being held on this subject at the Goetheanum (see next paragraph). But more particularly we will focus on the question: *What stands in the way of humanity cohering its will forces? How do individuals meet the challenge of doing, not what they want, but what is needed?*

This year attendance will be open to members of the School as usual and invited individuals. To register, please use the form attached or contact *Marc Desaulles* c/o:

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Four Meetings at the Goetheanum

As reported earlier, last October, pursuant to my question concerning the future of the Economics Conference, Paul Mackay invited Marc Desaulles and myself to the Goetheanum, the outcome of which was a series of four meetings with six other invited people. These meetings are looking in detail at how, in the world generally and in our own movement, the separation of the money markets from the goods market can be overcome. We are proceeding slowly but surely and this summer we hope to create an inventory of anthroposophical financial institutions and the way they are or could address this problem.

Economics Conference Account Update

The bookkeeping is now working well, with a colleague of mine from 35 years ago (Freider Sprich) now in the 'engine room' of the finance office at the Goetheanum. All that remains to be done is to get money flowing! The pipe for the purpose has been created for concerted coherent research into economic life from an associative point of view. But is such an approach alive in our will? Much often seems to be done in an uncoordinated, disjointed and even duplicative way. There are, for example, several archiving initiatives around the world at

the moment. But should this work not be located in an appropriate part of the School? This would help link the Section work of the School to current developments.

In the spirit of the Goetheanum Fund (goetheanumfund.org), one way to get money flowing would be for events and publications to devote a portion of their proceeds to research, shared 50/50 between the country of origin and the Goetheanum. This would augment the 2nd condition of membership of the Economics Conference: *Members undertake that the costs of the Economics Conference are not carried by the Goetheanum.* The initial point of this condition was not to look to the Goetheanum for finance, but how wonderful it would be if one could take a further step and generate funds for the work of the Goetheanum in Dornach and around the world.

(In my own case, I am rethinking the financing of my activities in this way and am also discussing similar arrangements with publishing colleagues. Does anyone else have similar to report?)

EC Newsletter and Associate!

This newsletter began as *Associate!*, originally in three languages, until this became too unwieldy and people said that English was in effect the lingua franca of economics. In January 2009 the name *Associate!* was transferred to the monthly journal edited by Arthur Edwards and myself, in part to give the Economics Conference an outer expression. The Newsletter continued on a simple occasional basis (this is No. 12), and thought is now being given to augmenting this medium as, or as part of, a members' forum. In the same vein, the Economics Conference website has a link to the associative-economics.com website.

Home Page in German

Although in meetings we defer to mother tongue, by request the lingua franca of the Economics Conference has become English. In part this is because English is a better common denominator for a worldwide movement, but also because, for various reasons, this is the primary language in the world for business, finance and economics. It may also reflect the need to interface with – even nuance or modify – what comes from the West. Insofar as this may have estranged some German-speaking friends, the Economics Conference Home Page is now also in German, with many thanks to Jutta Wollmer. A next step would be to do the same in Spanish and French, as there are members for whom these are first languages. Volunteers? Please form an orderly queue!

Database Update

The database has recently been 'gardened'. If there is any problem with your address or other information please get in touch.

Forwards or Backwards?

If we understand that our ideas about economic life are part of (not apart from) spiritual life, interfacing the sections of the School with modern cultural life is a simple enough concept. But what a challenge it seems to be to the will and to concerted karma! Now, in 2012, one wonders if things have reached a crossroads, meaning either the contribution of spiritual science becomes quickened and more visible, or we risk creating a vacuum; meaning we risk that something opposed to spiritual science will enter into economic thinking. The remainder of this edition addresses of this issue.

Next Step(s)

In recent weeks, there has been a lively email discussion prompted by Daniel Osmer's concern (see below) that, regarding the oft-discussed question of an Economics Section, the time has come to take a next step. Here are recorded highlights from that exchange (edited in the interests of space).

"I have just finished reading Anthroposophy Worldwide May, 2012. On Page 3 Sebastian Jüngel reports: *"It is up to individuals and how they live their relationships, a fact that became apparent at the annual conference of the Social Sciences Section and when the Visual Arts Section was newly constituted. It is the individual person or member who can decide to say: yes, I want this section; or: yes, I want this or that project and will actively help to make it happen. If that happens there is no need to expect anything from a third party – for instance, that a Council member or section leader should say what needs doing. What spoke out of these contributions was that the Anthroposophical Society is what its members actively initiate."* So, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of you to the Economics Section and request that the convener of the Economics Conference of the Goetheanum inaugurate plans for a party – a section celebration. What do you say?"

– Daniel Osmer

"The inclusion of "A View from the US" in the Newsletter seems to be a step towards calling out a circle and I wonder if from there we might not also be joined by each of the countries where Economics Conference Accounts exist in order to highlight the global commitment to an Economics Section, not just in the US."

– Susan Gravelle

"...my only comment on Daniel's correspondence, other than to say thank you for your passionate voicing of the needs and realities of the Economics Section, is on this remark: *The point being, to demonstrate that there is increasing activity and interest in matters economic. This, it seems to me, is a better position for eventually suggesting a stand-alone Economics Section, worldwide in nature, no matter who or where it comes from.* I think it could be helpful to draw attention to the Economics-Conference-becoming-Section with an intentional venue for matters economic from the US, but not as a separate publication or directed via the Social Sciences Section in North America News... The fact that there is a growing awareness of the EC from within the Goetheanum is indicative of a step-change ... and I would like to support and strengthen that impulse."

– Kim Chotzen

"The question for me is whether those who are currently part of the Economics Conference can create an Economics Section out of their own resources. There seem to be three main issues:

The *initiative* of those within the 'Section': meaning their initiative to schedule events, undertake research, publish results and generally work together in a co-ordinated way. The *recognition* of the Economics Conference / Section from others within the Anthroposophical Movement: meaning the Collegium of the School, the Vorstand, the Societies worldwide, the membership, those who are not members but active in the field of economics. The *funding* of the Section / Conference: meaning substantial flows of resources that would enable people to dedicate themselves to this work.

Would the formal creation of a Section help galvanise the three areas above? This was what Jesse suggested after the last worldwide meeting in Dornach. But what if the requirement of a Section is that these three areas strengthen themselves?"

– Arthur Edwards

"I would just add a couple of thoughts. It seems to me that there should be more events appearing under the Auspices of the Economics Conference worldwide that do not directly involve Christopher. It seems to me any member of the Conference could just do this and coordinate with CHB so the website is updated and the word gets out, etc. Such events could range from studying the economics course to providing workshops. [Can we franchise *Colours of Money*. ;-)]

The other would be to create more articles/publications coming out of the Economics Conference. How this would work or be coordinated would need to be thought through further. Creating a section in the current EC Newsletter for the various country activities is a great idea and also to put them on the EC website.

The main hurdle is to communicate the perception of why the Section is needed now so urgently. That means a constant stream of articles, etc. This is something that Arthur and I have started but not completed yet. An article a month may be sufficient.

As for funding: It would appear once the clear budget for the Section is created."

– Jesse Osmer

"Where are the written procedures for starting a section? It seems to me, any member of the School should understand that it is a missing link in a modern Anthroposophical Society. That is, if they are aware of the importance and functions of the professional sections. A general appeal and explanation might be a good start. Even if birthed without significant resources or a mass of people, I feel it is still an important step to take. For me, as I write this, it is the general lack of concern and understanding about this long-lived oversight that astounds me"

– Daniel Osmer

My own response is that, while I appreciate Daniel's intention and even frustration, are we now coming to a step change? If so, this would need to take the form of a circle of people doing concrete things that the world recognises, but that are also based on followed-through initiatives rather than 'impulses', the name we often give to our undertakings. How this develops remains to be seen, but for me it needs to be or to have the character of a circle, not separate or lone individuals. But not a group either. I also assume that any new section would need to be agreed to by the existing High School Collegium, and cannot be a unilateral act. The Collegium is the second party. There is no third party.

In the forthcoming annual meeting at L'Aubier we may want to discuss this topic in more depth, only I would ask that it be tabled *by those who are proposing it*. In the February issue of *EC News*, I also wondered if the Economics Conference were not the kind of circle that is an aspect of the Michaeli Meeting at the Goetheanum, 25-29 September. I wonder, therefore, whether that is not the place to take this question further. However, that meeting will be in German, with English translation.

Concerning the Disclaimer

A disclaimer on the Economics Conference home page states: "The Economics Conference as such has no view and does not advocate one." In the light of the current debate in our movement about relativism and diffidence concerning the representation of anthroposophy, I thought I should, as author of the statement, clarify what I mean by my formulation. I would very much welcome comments from other members. The statement could then be modified.

As a standing conference, the Economics Conference is not an entity but a meeting place. As such it is also not a being, though one would hope it is carefully watched over by, and might even one day be the home of one. As a meeting place for independent researchers, it exists to enable them to develop and share their work and hopefully to receive the kind of insights that collegiate endeavour makes possible. But there is no 'party line' that members are required to follow. It cannot be, for example, that we only talk about 'true prices' or advocate this as a dogma. But we do, quite deliberately, ask what does this seminal concept (as well as many others) given by Rudolf Steiner mean? And to what extent does it guide or thinking and our practical proposals?

In that sense, while the Economics Conference as such has no view, its primary terms of reference are those of spiritual science and the specific ideas of Rudolf Steiner concerning economic life. Members of the Economics Conference may in their individual and professional lives look at life from this and any other number of perspectives, but in the Economics Conference the work of Rudolf Steiner and the methodology of spiritual science, certainly as outlined in the Economics course, is our ground.

As Rudolf Steiner once intimated, if one has a conviction one should represent it, and do so forcefully. Those who hold other convictions may be relied upon to do this on their own behalf; one should not do it for them. He also said that not to do this is cowardice in thinking. History, however, will be the judge of one's conviction, but history will not be able to make that judgement if the conviction is not clearly, unequivocally voiced.

That means, surely, that, as well as exploring the ideas of spiritual science as regards economic life, we also need to bring into the world ideas which, while not given by Rudolf Steiner himself, resonate with his own contribution. That means they must be grounded in the methodology already mentioned.

To my mind, however, that also means something else. Relativism and dogmatism also risk demeaning the stature and status of Rudolf Steiner as an initiate. Before one says he is an economist among many, as some hint, try not only to understand the tailor example, for instance, but imagine you are articulating it for the first time. Or that land, labour and capital are '*factors of price formation*'. Or the true price formula. Or three kinds of money. Or...

So, while members of the Economics Conference are assumed to be champions of spiritual science and of the anthroposophical world conception, and in this sense, to very definitely have a view, not so their meeting place.

Note: Such information as has been sent in is published here. Another medium for seeing or notifying what is going on is associative-economics.com.