



Economics Conference of the Goetheanum

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

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Welcome to 2011, a year that marks the 100th anniversary of Rudolf Steiner's Neuchatel lectures on Christian Rosenkreutz. Central to the year's events will therefore be the 10th Annual Meeting of the Economics Conference (28th September to 1st October), with its theme: **Rosicrucian Aspects of Economic Life.** A theme that has been many years in gestation yet one that is seldom commented on, we will consider the relationship of Christian Rosenkreutz to economic life. The meeting will again be held at L'Aubier, Neuchatel, Switzerland and will be preceded on 27th September by a lecture by Sergei Prokofieff marking the 100th anniversary of Rudolf Steiner's lectures held in Neuchatel in 1911.

In part, the focus is linked to last year's Annual Meeting, where we touched on **The Mission of Folk Souls**, lectures given in 1910, seemingly as a foil to Theodore Roosevelt's vision concerning international relations. Whereas Roosevelt's approach is characterised by fixity and abstraction, Steiner's is based on the dynamic and reality of beings whose existence is interwoven with the peoples of the earth.

But the Christian Rosenkreutz theme also links us to deeper aspects of Rudolf Steiner's response: What is the nature of what is coming out of 'the West'? Is it the case that the West denies the middle realm, the centre, in absolute terms, or only temporarily? What does it mean for world destiny to come under the influence of merely economic forces? Is it that a free spiritual life has to be brought over against this, opposing it as a force as if from outside, a force, moreover, that many argue has to emerge in Central Europe? Or is it that 'the centre' nowadays is an emancipated place that arises wherever one stands in the Christmas Conference, in the sense of that event as a close working together between Rudolf Steiner and Christian Rosenkreutz? And as regards economic life, is the right historical response to be non- economic in character and in opposition to Anglo-Saxonism or is it to be "universally human"? And is it to have an overtly political dimension such the basic income movement, or be more of a cultural event, such as discovering the spiritual within finance? And if it is to be financial, how could this be other than by taking its cue from the impulses given, the statements made, and the examples set in the Christmas Conference?

Financing the Work of the Goetheanum

Given the financial problems facing the Goetheanum is it not the time to give fresh thought to the indications given in 1923/4 concerning the finances of the Anthroposophical Movement and of the Goetheanum in particular? At the end of the gathering – when, that is, the Christmas Conference having been

brought to earth, its on-going reality was ‘vouchsafed’ by Rudolf Steiner to our collective good will – he made three calls to the will.

The first was Statute 12: “Membership dues shall be fixed by the individual groups; each group shall however submit ... for each of its members to the central leadership of the Society at the Goetheanum.” This was adopted without dissent on 28 December 1923. The second came on the morning of 31 December with the discussion about research finance: "...I am not expressing this as a wish nor even as a possibility, but merely as an illusion, though a very realistic illusion. If we had 75 million Francs we could achieve what has to be achieved. This is something that we should at least think about." The third was Rudolf Steiner’s response to the question of Mr van Leer, when on 1 January 1924 he asked about founding a World Goetheanum Association for the funding of the Goetheanum, to the effect that while humanity might not be ready for it, there was no reason not to do so.

(For an example of what the latter might look like, consider ***The Goetheanum Fund*** (see goetheanumfund.org), a simple arrangement inviting national societies to provide an account through which they pro-actively raise money for the work of the Goetheanum (meaning the sections of the School of Spiritual Science and the practical activities which carry this work into the world). Originally proposed to the Vorstand in 2004 by the Swiss Society and endorsed by them, the Swiss Society took a first step with the ‘FondsGoetheanum’ project. Five colour supplements have now appeared in a main Swiss ‘quality’ Sunday newspaper, resulting in several thousand new supporters of the work and a considerable

flow of money, half of which for the sections at the Goetheanum, the balance for practical work in Switzerland, e.g. the Agricultural Section and the Bio-dynamic Farming Association.)

The Economics Conference Account

As regards its own affairs, in an endeavour to ‘walk Rudolf Steiner’s talk’, as well as the account at the Goetheanum, accounts are being established in different parts of the world in a similar spirit to the Goetheanum Fund. The idea is that funds are raised for associative economics research, a proportion for use in the country concerned, the balance for use worldwide, with special attention paid to publishing as this provides a worldwide medium, no matter how local or small-scale the research undertaken. In the UK the arrangement is with Hermes Trust, an anthroposophical charity of long-standing, in the US with the Society in America. In Australia and Hungary simple ‘club accounts’ have been opened. In terms of money flows, the hope is to fund research and publications, but also to remit funds to the Goetheanum primarily to facilitate meetings there, the money being spent into the Goetheanum’s economy. Small amounts have begun to flow, paradoxically mainly from seminars organised in part as fund raisers for the Economics Conference. As the idea gains currency and efforts are made to raise funds more deliberately, it is hoped that this will provide an extra string to the fund-raising bow.

Associative Economics in London

With the anticipated deepening of will (as also opposition to it) that one can expect of the link to Christian Rosenkreutz, and with an eye to the problems caused by the prevailing economic paradigm centred particularly in the English-speaking world, an increasing number of events are planned for Rudolf Steiner House in London under the auspices of the Economics Conference, and aimed at bringing spiritual scientific insights to bear on current-day problems, ranging from the financing to education to monetary policy. The sessions are open to both those who are generally interested and those who are professionally engaged in economic life.

Worldwide Meeting

A colleague from Romania, Dan Botez, has suggested that, in addition to the 'in-house' Annual Meeting at L'Aubier this year, a wider gathering should be held aimed at bringing together as wide a range of representatives of associative economics as possible. If anyone would like to support such an event, take part or suggest ways to achieve it, please get in touch. A main question is whether such a meeting should be held at the Goetheanum or in London.

Associate!

In 2011, the monthly journal, *Associate!*, edited by Christopher Houghton Budd, Arthur Edwards and Stephen Torr as part of their efforts to promote Steiner's ideas in the English-speaking world, will also provide a means for increasing the dialogue with mainstream, publicly known economists in Britain.