

## Concerning the funding of 'anthroposophical' initiatives

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I fully get the idea of finding ways to capitalise 'anthroposophical' initiatives and that this ought to be a central concern of every group of the Anthroposophical Society. But what do we understand by 'anthroposophical initiatives' and how might the Anthroposophical Society play a part in their capital funding?

For me, 'anthroposophical initiative' is a vague and even mischievous term unless one understands it as what members of the Society do in public life when, in their capacity as members of the School of Spiritual Science, they act representatively of anthroposophy (that being the sole and substantial condition of membership of the School).<sup>102</sup> Quite what such initiatives look like depends on the karma of their authors. They can range in scale and scope from kindergarten teaching to central bank governance.

How such initiatives will be funded is, for me, a simple question of whether by investment (shares), loans or donations. There are no other ways. And the funding should be a match in type and amount for the undertaking being financed.<sup>103</sup> Why lend to students, for example? Or give to a commercial venture? And be careful not to lend to the latter if it is risk capital that is needed. Finally, above all, expect and require financial literacy on the part of the recipients of funds, and avoid funding that robs, denies or excuses them of their responsibility to fulfil whatever obligations they enter into.

There are, of course, all manner of capitalising techniques and arrangements available today, but most are informed by and underwritten by the ethos of egotism, manifesting as the intention to preserve rather than circulate capital, and so, typically, made conditional on a 'return'. In the anthroposophical movement we also place too much reliance on capital preservation rather than, for example, bond financing.

Whether as a recipient or a provider, to overcome capital preservation one should focus on some combination of bond financing and spend-out foundations, but *not* on endowment funds of the Harvard variety, where capital is locked into financial markets for the purpose of (a) trivial (interest only) revenue disbursement, and (b) recapitalising most of the revenue to maintain trivial disbursement into the long future. Almost by definition, such investing can only be in financial instruments (e.g: the Forex) and not in 'real' economic activity.

As regards those who seek to provide such funds, these also ought to be financially literate and competent people, ideally members of the School who represent anthroposophy by way precisely of their financial dealings and behaviour. However, I do not see this as a proper role for a group of the Anthroposophical Society because it makes such competences an unspoken condition of membership of its Council. In general, I do not see the work of the Anthroposophical Society as compatible with active, let alone innovative, financial behaviour. By all means, let anthroposophists undertake such things, but the Anthroposophical Society should be the net beneficiary of their surpluses, not their instrument or locus, and firewalled from their risks.<sup>104</sup>

When the Anthroposophical Society becomes a grant-making body I think it risks compromising its mission for two reasons: (a) grant-making requires special competences, and (b) the members then look to the Council for money and thereby give to the Council jurisdiction as to what is or is not 'anthroposophical'. In fact, when it comes to receiving money, whether of a Group or a Branch, a Council should be undertaking its *own* initiatives, subject to its own competences and literacy.<sup>105</sup>

All this impacts on the type of entity a group of the Anthroposophical Society chooses to be. If it is light on prospects of being able to receive or handle 'serious' funding activity (though its Council may have ambitions in that regard), and if its Branch specifications are not those of a financing organisation but of

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<sup>102</sup> See *The Challenges of Christmas 1923*, Marc Desaulles.

([https://economics.goetheanum.org/fileadmin/economics/Towards\\_2023/EC\\_MD\\_The\\_Challenges\\_of\\_Christmas\\_1923.pdf](https://economics.goetheanum.org/fileadmin/economics/Towards_2023/EC_MD_The_Challenges_of_Christmas_1923.pdf))

<sup>103</sup> I assume here that the thing being capitalised has a revenue stream commensurate with what it is (i.e. it is needed by someone and is not merely a 'vanity' project). Often, though, the revenue (or 'gate') is inadequate to costs, in which case the revenue deficit will need donation-funding.

<sup>104</sup> I would think differently if there were a President, General Secretary and Treasurer and if the role of the President was to commend to council what the General Secretary provided as vision and the treasurer said s/he could undertake the financing of. To our detriment, however, in my view the office of president is currently out of fashion in the anthroposophical movement.

<sup>105</sup> See previous footnote.

an often somewhat moralistic spiritual organisation – it should adhere to standard procedures for when a 'mother' charity shelters subsets of itself.

Though often not necessary, if the Anthroposophical Society is a registered charity, it would then benefit from an external audit (if only to verify its auto-auditing), so that it can seek funds for its *Council's* purposes. That said, I would not conceive or position a Country Group of the Anthroposophical Society as a serious funding vehicle for the reasons already given. For that, I would think in terms of a sister entity – free to act and not subject to the membership of a club. It is also clear to me, that charitable status or any other form of regulation should be avoided if possible, evidencing and proving instead any 'non-profit' activity – via its accounts and money flows, rather than its legal form, and showing in that way that its general working assumptions, habits and procedures are a fit for initiative-taking.