

Going Beyond Self-Interest in Economic Life: Part I

Rudolf Steiner's Indications on the Ownership and Use of Land and Other Means of Production

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Introduction

In order to understand Rudolf Steiner's indications on land use, it is necessary to consider his ideas concerning the threefold nature of social life. From this perspective, society is viewed as consisting of three primary elements: culture, law (rights-state), and the economy. It is now common to see references to these three aspects in the media. But what makes Steiner's approach unique is that he recognizes that each of these spheres has its own inherent dynamic and therefore should have its own independent and relatively autonomous basis. Thus, for example, the state should be limited to recognizing and upholding rights and should not be involved with such things as determining the goals of education or directing the economy. How the three different spheres should be involved in making decisions about land and capital will be addressed in this essay.

Land use and ownership are timely subjects, and there are presently a number of efforts to establish new communities and enterprises based on a spiritual view of the human being. Individual connected with these efforts are looking for ideas about the use and ownership of land that are in harmony with their social striving. This sometimes leads them to consider forming a Community Land Trust¹, which removes land from the market while providing the means for community involvement in the determination of how such land should be used. The efforts of the Community Land Trust movement focused initially on urban low-income housing developments and rural agricultural-based initiatives. The Community Supported Agriculture movement, in turn, has in various situations found Community Land Trusts to be a means of furthering its efforts to establish a socially responsible approach to agriculture².

Steiner's vision of responsible land use is all encompassing in that it can provide the conceptual basis for multifaceted land-based communities. Using Steiner's thoughts, the social activist can go beyond addressing single issues such as housing or farming to consider how to found complete village communities³.

In order to think about new forms of community life it is necessary to consider all three facets of society already mentioned. This threefold approach in its deepest sense can be recognized as Christian.⁴ This is not meant to be taken in any sectarian or dogmatic

¹ See Robert Swann, "Community Land Trusts: Is Profiting on Land a Natural Right?," *The Threefold Review*, Issue No. 11, Summer/Fall 1994

² See Gary Lamb, "Community Supported Agriculture: Can It Become the Basis for an Associative Economy?," *The Threefold Review*, Issue No. 11, Summer/Fall 1994

³ The term communities need not be limited to rural situations. Only a generation ago, one could still experience local community life within sections of large cities.

⁴ In the lecture "Some Characteristics of Today," given on June 12, 1919, in Heidenheim, Germany, Rudolf Steiner stated that "These things which are being made know today.... Through our 'Threefold State' are the Christianity of today; they are spiritual revelations clothed in external forms."

way. Rather, it is a social approach that recognizes and is based on the abiding spirit in every person and that fosters a compassionate concern for fellow community members regardless of cultural or other differences.

The threefolding of society eliminates or at least counterbalances many of the antisocial arrangements prevalent today. The unique contribution that Steiner makes to social science is based on his recognition and understanding of spirit and soul in the human being and in the world.

The effort to open-mindedly understand Steiner's threefold picture of social life does not yield a set of dogmatic rules or arrangements to be systematically followed but rather encourages the development of new faculties. Such faculties enable a person to know what steps can be taken toward an ideal in a given situation.

Just as there are forces and laws related to the physical world, so are there forces and laws related to social life. And just as in physical life problems arise when we try to work contrary to its forces and laws, so also in social life problems will arise when we work contrary to social forces and laws.

Social experiments often take much longer and are more difficult to analyze than laboratory experiments. The social scientist or activist should therefore make a significant effort to work from foresight rather than wait to see the outer results of specific actions in order to determine whether or not they are worthwhile (although a person's faculties and judgments should certainly be enhanced and refined by practical experience). This does not mean a social scientist or activist can know in advance whether or not his ideas will be met with proper understanding or how strong the opposing forces will be, but when he is familiar with social laws and forces he can know whether specific actions will be a step toward social misery and want or toward social health.

Numerous people sense that many social injustices arise from our present form of land ownership, but they are unwilling to do anything about the situation because to do so would jeopardize their vested interests in the present system.

Consider a few acknowledged facts concerning land ownership and use in modern capitalistic society.

1. Land is treated like a commodity.
2. Therefore, values are attached to land and it is bought and sold like other commodities.
3. Attached to the ownership of property are certain exclusive rights of access and use.
4. Only those people with sufficient money can own (or lease) a specific piece of land and secure those rights.
5. In general, those who are the owners of land and other means of production are in a better economic position than those who are not.

In order to grasp the implications of these few facts we first need to consider the ways a commodity gains value in the economy.⁵

⁵ All italicized sections are quotations from the works of Rudolf Steiner. References are listed at the end of the article.

The Creation of Values in the Economy

All goods have their origin in land or nature. What initially gives a product its value is the human labor expended to extract it from its original state. Human labor is utilized in every step of the economic process to transform the product into a useful good or deliver it to the consumer, thus increasing its value along the way.⁶

[Value] arises thus: Human labor is expended on the products of nature, and we have before us in economic circulation nature-products transformed by human labor. It is only here that a true economic value first arises. So long as the nature-product is untouched, at the place where it is found in nature, it has no other value than it has, for instance, for the animals. But the moment you take the very first steps to put the nature-product into the process of economic circulation, the nature-product so transformed begins to have economic value. We may therefore characterize this economic value as follows: "An economic value, seen from this one aspect, is a nature-product transformed by human labor." Whether the human labor consists in digging or chopping, or merely moving a product of nature from one place to another, is irrelevant. (WE, pg. 29)

If we accept the premise that a commodity must gain its value in the first instance through the labor that is expended on it, serious questions immediately arise concerning the valuation of land. Steiner maintained that land itself should not and cannot have an economic value attached to it. The values and prices we attach to land itself are an economic absurdity.

Capital usually refers to forms of wealth such as land, buildings, machinery, money, and so on that are used to produce goods and services. Steiner also used the term capital in this way, but does not attach commodity values to all of them as is usually done. The term capital used in the following quotation refers to monetary wealth. He points out that when land is used as security for loans (mortgaged) a fictitious value is assigned to the land.

*If I unite capital with nature, the value of nature will of course be enhanced. The more a thing is mortgaged, the more will eventually have to be paid for it. The value is constantly increased. But is this increase in the value of land a **reality**? No, it is no reality at all.... In so far as it is mere nature, the land can have no value at all. All you can do is to give it a fictitious value by uniting capital with it. So that we may say: What is called the value of land in the sense of present-day economics is in real truth none other than the capital fixed in the land. And the capital fixed in the land is not a real value but an apparent value—a semblance of a value. That is the point. (WE, pg. 66)*

⁶ The transformation of nature by human labor is not the only way to create values in the economy. In his *World Economy* Steiner also describes how the organization of labor through human intelligence (spirit) also creates values. This way of creating values is not discussed in this essay since it is peripheral to the theme addressed here.

Steiner saw land as the basis of the whole economy, firstly as the source of all goods and secondly as a means or instrument of production that makes the whole economic process possible.

In the case of artificially created means of production, such as factory buildings and machinery or equipment, Steiner maintained that they should be viewed as an extension of the land and that they only have a commodity character, possessing economic value, while they are being built.

He alone has the reality who in receiving a piece of money of a certain magnitude in exchange for something, knows that it signifies so much work upon the land. We must, of course, include in our calculations the work that is done on other means of production. These will, however, be equivalent to nature. For the moment they are finished, and thus leave the realm of commodities altogether, they are devalued inasmuch as it is no longer possible to buy or sell them. They thus become equivalent to the means of production which we have in nature directly. It is therefore only a continuation of the part which nature already plays in the economic process, when we say that means of production should be dealt with in this way. Moreover, it is only in this way that we can have a clear idea of nature herself, considered as means of production. (WE, p. 183)

If we wish to do away with the present method of transforming land and other means of production through buying and selling, what other methods are available to us? One obvious way is through state ownership and control as embodied in socialism. But this is not what Steiner suggested. He acknowledged that certain social evils have arisen through the private ownership of land, and he also pointed out the economic inconsistency of attaching values to land itself. But he, unlike the socialists, recognized that private access to land is necessary for a healthy, efficient modern economy. What he strove to articulate is an approach that would acknowledge the benefits of private use of land as a means of production while eliminating the negative social consequences of private ownership. He referred to this approach when considering how capitalist tendencies affect land use. As mentioned previously, land is one form of capital and the references to capital in the following quotations also apply to land. It is important for the reader to recognize that Steiner used the term *value* in two different ways when referring to land. While land itself should have no economic value, it has an inherent value just as, for instance, human life has value. In contradistinction, commodities are meant to be consumed and their economic values depend on this fact.

Certain [prerequisites for life] may very well make it necessary for a district to be [developed] in a particular way. Such conditions may be of a moral nature; they may be founded on spiritual and cultural peculiarities. However, it is entirely possible that the fulfillment of these conditions would result in a smaller [yield] will equal [that] resulting from other undertakings. Thus [the development of] values that may be very necessary to a real civilization [is thereby suppressed]. Under the influence of this purely capitalist orientation, the estimation of economic values becomes one-sided; it is no longer rooted on the living

connection we must have with nature and with cultural life, if nature and spiritual life are to give satisfaction in body and in soul.

It is easy to jump to the conclusion that for this reason capitalism must be abandoned. The question is whether in so doing we would not also be abandoning the very foundations of modern civilization. Anyone who thinks the capitalist orientation a mere intruder into modern economic life will demand its removal. However, he who sees that division of labor and social function are the essence of modern life will only consider how best to exclude from social life the disadvantages that arise as a by-product of this capitalist tendency. He will clearly perceive that the capitalist method of production is a consequence of modern life, and that its disadvantages can make themselves felt only as long as increase of capital is made the sole criterion of economic value.

The ideal is to work towards a social structure in which the criterion of capital increase will no longer be the only power to which production is subjected. In an appropriate social structure, the increase of capital should rather serve as an indicator that the economic life, by taking into account all the requirements of our bodily and spiritual nature, is correctly formed and organized. (RSO, pp. 39-40; words in brackets correct errors in translation)

[C]ommodity nature is suited... only to those goods or values meant for immediate human consumption; for the valuation of these, we have an immediate standard in our physical and spiritual needs. There is no such standard in the case of land or artificially created means of production. The valuation of these things depends on many factors that become apparent only when one takes into account the entire social structure of human life. (RSO, p. 41)

The Buying and Selling of Rights

Before discussing how the ownership of land should be transferred from person to person, it is important to realize what is really happening when land is bought and sold. Property ownership is directly connected to the right of use of the land. We are really buying and selling rights when we buy and sell property—the rights of exclusive access to and use of the land. Rights are being bought and sold like commodities; these rights are circulated through the economy with each purchase and sale. The possessor of these rights obtained through economic means is in a position to gain further economic advantage over those who do not own land. This illustrates how the principle of equality in the rights-state and an appropriate distribution of wealth in the economy are undermined through the fact that land is sold on the market.

When someone acquires a piece of land through purchase, the process must be considered an exchange of the land for commodities, represented by the purchase money. The land itself, however, does not act as a commodity in economic life. Its position is based on the right of a person to use it. (TSR, p. 66)

If we observe the economic process, we perceive that... certain impossibilities are actually realized in the economic life... There is no point of contact between

commodities and rights. Nevertheless, in the actual economic process, commodities (or the money-values representing them) are perpetually being exchanged for rights. Precisely when we pay for land, even when we merely help with our rent to pay for the value of the land, we are paying for a right with a commodity or with the money which we have received for a commodity. At any rate, we pay for a rights-value with a commodity-value. (WE, pp. 102-103)

Transferring Capital to Capable People

Now we must address the question: What is the proper way to transfer the ownership of land and other types of capital in order to avoid social injustices?

Steiner's answer to this question is simple. We have already established the conceptual basis to support the idea that land and the means of production have no economic value. It inevitably follows that what has no economic value should not be bought and sold like a commodity. It also makes sense that for the benefit of society, capital be entrusted to individuals who have the capabilities and will to work on behalf of society or the community.

Yes, there should be private use of capital. But this capital should be entrusted to capable individuals for so long as they can put it to good use for the benefit of the community. And when this is no longer the case it should be made available to another capable individual or group of individuals. Since there is no buying and selling of capital, the incentive to accumulate capital for personal profit is eliminated. Other types of incentives than personal profit must be found within social life.

*Presently, the best services can be rendered to the community as a whole only by qualified persons through the control of large sums of capital. However, the nature of economics dictates that such services can only consist of the most efficient production of the goods that the community needs. A certain amount of economic power flows into the hands of the people who produce such goods. **It cannot be otherwise**, and the threefold social order recognizes this. Accordingly, it aims to bring about a society in which this economic power will still arise, but out of which no social evils can grow. The threefold idea does not propose to hinder the accumulation of large sums of capital in individual hands; it recognizes that to do so would be to lose the possibility of employing socially the abilities of these private individuals in the service of the general public. It proposes, however, that the moment an individual can no longer attend to the management of the means of production within his sphere of power, these means of production should be transferred to another capable person. The latter will not be able to obtain these means of production through any economic power he may possess, but solely because he is the most capable person. (RSO, p.104)*

Whereas we now say that capital makes business, the impulse for the threefold order of the social organism requires that, although it should always be possible to accumulate capital, provision must be made for capital to be administered by someone who has developed out of the spiritual life the necessary capacity for business, and that this accumulation of capital may be administered by the person

to whom it belongs only as long as he is able to administer it himself. When the capitalist can no longer put his own capacities into the administration of the capital, he must see—or if he should feel himself incapable of such a task, a corporation of the spiritual organization must assume the responsibility of seeing—that the management of the business shall pass to a highly capable successor, able to carry it on for the benefit of the community. That is to say that the transference of a business concern to any person or group of persons is not dependent on purchase or any other displacement of capital, but is determined by the capacities of individuals themselves. It is a matter of transfer from the capable to the capable, from those who can work in the service of the community to those who can also work in the best way for the common good. (SF, pp.118-119)

Incentives Beyond Self-Interest

In order to understand how incentives can arise that go beyond the profit motive or other forms of self-interest that are the driving forces of market capitalism, we need to consider more fully the roles of cultural life and the rights life in a properly articulated threefold society.⁷

Steiner characterized the spiritual-cultural life as including everything having to do with human development, including science, art, religion, and education in the broadest sense. Only in a cultural life liberated from political or economic interests can a true sense of community and fellowship arise. Furthermore, he maintained that the desire for personal profit is not a fundamental driving force in human nature but has been inserted into social life through a cultural life that is dominated by the state and the economy.

*If the economic system is to be organized in a way that can have no effect on our will to work, then our will to work must be stimulated in some other way. The threefold social order recognizes that at the present stage of human evolution, the economic sphere must limit itself exclusively to economic processes. The administration of such an economic order will be able, through its various organs, to determine the extent of consumers' needs, how the produce may be best brought to the consumers, and the extent to which various articles should be produced. However, it will have no way of calling forth the will to produce; neither will it be in a position to cultivate the individual abilities that are the vital source of the entire economic process. Under the old economic system that still survives, people cultivated these abilities hoping they would bring personal profit. It would be a dire mistake to believe that the mere command of an administrative body overseeing **only** the economy could arouse the desire to develop men's individual abilities, or to believe that such a command would have power enough to induce them to put their will into their work. The threefold social order seeks to prevent people from making this mistake. It aims at establishing within the*

⁷ Working out of self-interest is not only a problem for the capitalists but also for the workers. The main motive for the capitalist in our present economy is the striving for profit and for the worker it is the striving for higher wages. Workers are forced to fend for themselves in opposition to the capitalist. The issue of labor and income will be the focus of a follow-up essay.

*independent, self-sustaining cultural life a realm where one learns to see what each single piece of work means for the combined fabric of the social order, to see it in such a light that one will learn to **love** it because of its value for the whole. It aims at creating in this free life of the spirit the profounder principles that can replace the motive for personal gain. Only in a free spiritual life can a love for the human social order spring up that is comparable to the love an artist has for the creation of his works. If one is not prepared to consider fostering this kind of love within a free spiritual life, then one may as well renounce all striving for a new social order. Anyone who doubts that men and women are capable of being brought to this kind of love is unaware that it is the dependence of spiritual and cultural life upon the state and the economy that creates desire for personal profit—this desire for profit is **not** a fundamental aspect of human nature. (RSO, pp. 81-82)*

That addresses one aspect of the human soul whereby new motives for work can be found; the other must come from a democratic life of rights. A political state that occupies itself with controlling and dictating culture and the economy cannot properly recognize and uphold human rights. In order to enter fully into social life every person needs to feel that he or she is an equal and worthy member of society regardless of all cultural and other differences.

*And just as the free spiritual life will create the impulses for developing individual ability, the democratically ordered life of the legal sphere will provide the impulses for the will to work. Real relationships will grow up between people united in a social organism where each adult has a voice in government and is co-equal with every other adult: it is relationships such as these that are able to enkindle the will to work "for the community." One must reflect that a truly communal feeling can grow only from such relationships, and that from this feeling, the will to work will grow. For in actual practice the consequence of such a state founded on democratic rights will be that each human being will take his place with vitality and full consciousness in the common field of work. Each will know what he or she is working for; and each will want to work within the working community of which he knows himself a member **through his will**. (RSO, p. 83)*

The fact that people, including those who are members of cultural minorities, do not experience such communal feelings does not contradict what Steiner maintained; rather, it reminds us of how far removed from being based on equality and democracy are our present political systems.

How Land Ownership is to Be Transferred

The cultural and political spheres have key roles to play in determining who should have access to land and how the transfer of land should take place.

In our present social order, ownership of land is primarily determined by economic transactions upheld by law. The person who has sufficient money to purchase land also obtains with the purchase the rights of exclusive use and access.

Steiner maintained that cultural insight should replace economic considerations as the main factor in determining who should be entrusted with capital. He suggested that specific organizations arise out of cultural life—*spiritual corporations*—consisting of people recognized by a community as having insight and good judgment in such matters. They would see to it that land and other means of production would be made available to capable people who want to use them to produce commodities or services the community needs and wants. These decisions arising out of the spiritual-cultural sphere—not the economic, as in conventional capitalism, and not the state, as in socialism—would be confirmed by the state.

On this kind of transference the social safety of the future depends. It will not be an economic transference, as is now the case; this transference will result from the impulses of the human being, received from the independent spiritual-intellectual life and from the independent legal-political life. There will even be corporations within the cultural organization, united with other departments of the cultural life, on which the administration of capital will devolve. Reasonable and just relations between man and man will enter into this new economic life, so that the spiritual, legal and economic organizations will work together as one, even though they are administered separately. Many will carry over from one sphere into another—since he belongs to all three—what each one needs....

The disposal of land, systemized in the laws relating to ownership, and the disposal of the finished means of production (for example, a factory with its machinery and equipment), should be no matter for the economic organization. They must belong partly to the spiritual and partly to the legal. That is to say, the transference of land from one person or group of persons to another must not be carried out by purchase or through inheritance, but by transference through legal means, on the principles of the spiritual organization. The means of production through which something is manufactured—a process that lies at the basis of the creation of capital—can only be looked at from the point of view of its commodity-cost while it is being built up. Once it is ready for operation, the creator of it takes over the management because he understands it best. He has charge of it as long as he can personally use his capacities. But the finished means of production is no longer a commodity to be bought and sold. It can only be transferred by one person or group of persons to another person or group of persons by law, or rather, by spiritual decisions confirmed by law. Thus, what a present forms part of the economic life, such as the laws relating to the disposal of property, to the sale of land, and to the right of disposal of the means of production, will be placed on the basis of the independent legal organization working in conjunction with the independent spiritual organization. These ideas may appear strange and unfamiliar today, but this fact is just what is so sad and bitter. Only when these things find entrance into the minds and souls and hearts of men, so that the human being orders his social life accordingly, only then can

be fulfilled what so many try to bring about in other ways, but always without success. (SF, pp. 119-121)

Steiner addressed another important point, which must be taken into consideration even by those connected with the Community Land Trust movement who already agree that land should no longer be treated like a commodity. In creating spiritually based intentional communities it will not suffice to set up a land trust if the people using the land continue to engage in all the other economic practices based on self-interest that wreak social havoc.

In several of his writings on the threefold social order, Steiner described the principle of economic association whereby producers and consumers consciously and rationally determine what and how much should be produced and what the quality standards of production should be. Decisions made in producer-consumer associations would replace the chance of the marketplace and create a forum for individuals to get to know and understand the perspectives and situations of the other fellow community members regardless of where they are placed in the economy. This would enable individuals to go beyond their particular perspectives and interests when making economic decisions. The Community Supported Agricultural movement, in which producers and consumers meet in this way, is an example of how it is possible at least to begin to work with such ideas.

Steiner also suggested that economic associations would take on the task of giving and receiving credit. Just as the use of land and buildings would be entrusted to individuals based on their capabilities and willingness to work for the community, so would loans for operational costs be given on the same basis.

Take the case of credit on land. In a healthy social life, an individual or a group possessing the necessary abilities may be given credit on land, enabling them to develop it by establishing some kind of production. It must be a development that seems justified on that land in light of all the cultural conditions involved. If credit is given on land from the purely capitalist viewpoint, in the effort to give it a commodity value corresponding to the credit provided, use of the land which would otherwise be the most desirable is possibly prevented.

A healthy system of giving credit presupposes a social structure that enables economic values to be estimated by their relation to the satisfaction of people's bodily and spiritual needs. Independent cultural and legal-political spheres will lead to a vital recognition of this relation and make it a guiding force. People's economic dealings will be shaped by it. Production will be considered from the viewpoint of human needs; it will no longer be governed by processes that obscure concrete needs through an abstract scale of capital and wages. The economic life in a threefold social order is built up by the cooperation of associations arising out of the needs of producers and the interests of consumers. These associations will have to decide on the giving and taking of credit. In their mutual dealings the impulses and perspectives that enter economic life from the cultural and legal spheres will play a decisive part. These associations will not be bound to a purely capitalist point of view. One association will deal directly with

another; thus the one-sided interests of one branch of production will be regulated and balanced by those of the other. (RSO, pp. 46-47)

Steiner felt that it was necessary to move away from using land as collateral or what he called *real credit*. If land has no economic value then it is not possible to mortgage it.

In a healthy economic process we must not and cannot give “real credit”—credit based on the security of land—even to a person working on the land. He too should only receive personal credit—that is to say, credit which will enable him to turn the capital to good account through the land. (WE, pg. 65)

Not only did he point out that economically it makes no sense to mortgage land or use it as collateral but that to do so has devastating consequences. He viewed the investment of capital in land as a congestion leading to social illness.

If we simply unite the land with the capital, the capital will become congested the moment it arrives again at nature.... It is one of the worst possible congestions in the economic process when capital is simply united with nature. (WE, pg. 65)

Steiner maintained that whenever excess capital arises it should never be invested in land. After an appropriate amount of the excess is reinvested in the economy for further development, the balance should be given over to the spiritual-cultural life, particularly to education. Steiner maintained that all the money that now goes into mortgages and becomes congested in land is precisely the money that should be going to support cultural life. Here we see an appropriate source of funding for education, the arts, scientific research, and religion.

But suppose there is too much capital. The several owners of capital will become painfully aware of the fact; they will not be able to start anything with their capital. This is indeed the case if you look into the matter historically. In actual fact, too much capital did arise, and the only way out which it could find was to conserve itself in nature. Thus we witnessed in the economic process the so-called rise in the value of land. (WE, p. 66)

To consider the financial support of cultural life from these perspectives provides a means to go beyond the debate between liberals and conservatives over the funding of the arts and education. No true solution can arise from either political perspective, only further social confusion and suffering.

Economic Associations and the Support of Cultural Life

Steiner sees the prevention of capital being damned up in land as a function of economic associations rather than of the state. The health and sustenance of a vital cultural life is dependent on capital flowing directly to it.

*The associations will find that when free spiritual life⁸ declines, too little is being **given freely**; they will grasp the connection.... In other words, the capital which presses to be invested, the capital which tends to march into mortgages and stay there, must be given an outlet into free spiritual institutions. That is the practical aspect. Let the associations see to it that the money which tends to get tied up in mortgages find its way into free spiritual institutions. There you have the connection of the associative life with the general social life. Only when you try to penetrate the realities of economic life does it begin to dawn on you what must be done in the one case or in the other. I do not by any means wish to agitate that this or that **must** be done. I only wish to point out what **is**. And this is undoubtedly true: What we can never attain by legislative measures—namely, to keep the excess capital away from nature—we can attain by the life and system of associations, diverting the capital into free spiritual institutions. I only say: If the one thing happens, the other will happen, too. Science, after all, has only to indicate the conditions under which things are connected. (WE, pp. 82-83)*

The Issue of Housing

Steiner did make a distinction between buildings used as a means of production and those used for housing. He classifies housing as “long-lived” commodities. Therefore, one can imagine it would be appropriate to own a home as private property, but not the land on which it rests. Consistent with this approach, Community Land Trusts often have privately owned homes.

*To understand the economic conditions in a **closed economic domain**, we must see clearly that within the economic domain—in the mutual interplay of production, consumption and commerce (that is, in effect, circulation)—we have on the one hand consumable commodities, some of them relatively lasting, no doubt; while on the other hand we have the thing we call “money.” Now as regards the form of economy to which these things are subject, it makes an essential difference whether we envisage the class of foodstuffs for example (short-lived products) or of clothing (more long-lived) or, let us say, of furniture or houses (more long-lived still). With respect to their use and consumption we have these important differences of duration as between different kinds of economic products. (WE, pp. 142-143)*

Conclusion

The questions of how to regard land in an appropriate way and how to develop community life in the future are inextricably bound together. Conventional private ownership of land will always be the source of antisocial forces streaming into a community. Landowners inevitably look at any activity or development in their vicinity from the perspective of property values. Their tendency will be to support what increases property values and oppose that which does not.

⁸ The term *free* in “free spiritual life” as Steiner characterized it does not mean free of charge but rather unhindered or unrestricted by political or economic forces.

Established or newly forming intentional communities that hold land have the possibility of implementing some of Steiner's indications. Such communities could set aside a portion of the land—and perhaps even develop it by erecting buildings—to be utilized by economic initiatives. If land is already in hand and not mortgaged, there would be the possibility of entrusting the use of land without charge to responsible businesses that valued the cultural activities in the community enough to contribute to their support.⁹ Even individual private schools with sufficient land could find, along these lines, creative solutions to their fiscal struggles and may also discover alternatives to endowment funds.

When land is not viewed as a commodity there arises the possibility of eradicating many social problems, including those having to do with the profit motive, the distribution of wealth, and the funding of cultural life. Furthermore, such an approach to land can create, as Steiner has indicated, a new basis for community life that fosters a sense of dignity in its members and promotes individual initiatives that benefit the whole community.

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⁹ While we are still in the situation that land is taxed—from a threefold perspective *no* land should be taxed since it has no value—tax costs would have to be factored in.

