

"Not For Profit" in the Elysia Commons

How Charities Engage

The Elysia Commons is an association of organisations. It was created to solve a number of common problems that organisations often face, and also to support health in organisational life by promoting development, collaboration and discernment.

Anthroposophy is a source of inspiration and guidance for the Elysia Commons, and through the Elysia Commons it makes a contribution, along with other modern perspectives, to the renewal of capitalism.

*For Profit in the Elysia Commons*ⁱ explores the flow of money from the perspective of Rudolf Steiner's *Three Fold Social Commonwealth*. This paper explores organisational life from the insights that Rudolf Steiner brought of freedom and the Spiritual Hierarchies.

Here is the summary from *Spiritual Background to Organisational Life*ⁱⁱ from which this paper picks up the theme of purpose:

The highest is the most intimate thing of all: love. This love cascades down through all the Hierarchies until it becomes the reality of my love for my work, aligned with my purpose, in harmony with the work of others, in line with the spirit of the age. This love can only be effective within a context of never-ceasing movement within a safe container, developing ceaselessly towards greater wisdom. Then it can create new being in line with the truth; it can be an image of the love of God to his creation.

The Holy Spirit working through my Angel allures me to choose life, development and self-giving love instead of stasis, decline and selfishness. He does this by beckoning me to realise that everything that I experience is the reality that I have chosen to co-create. And that the 'I' that I truly am has been shaped and endowed by the Logos through many cycles of time to arrive at this point of wondrous privilege and potential: the point at which it is given into my hands to decide how I choose to see reality around me, and what I choose to co-create here and now, that will have endless consequences in the future.

Creation is an overflow of the divine love, endlessly abundant and generous. Its purpose is to beckon creatures to increase the glory of God by exercising their choice to love and become co-creators. By creating organisations, we are not only making good places for human beings to be creative. We may channel the forces of the Logos to create new worlds.

*The following that Jesus wanted was not that of man drawn by personal devotion to himself, or of those who were concerned about their own salvation, but of those who would share with him in his devotion to the finding and doing of the Father's will. To Jew and gentile alike this was so utterly incredible that they simply could not take it in... It never occurred to them that he could possibly think of religion as not involving concern for God's favour and the soul's salvation, or of these not being the blessings promised to God's elect. Leonard Hodgson, *Sex and Christian Freedom*, quoted in *The Go-Between God*, p. 37*

Purpose

"He determines the value of life by measuring achievements against aims."

Rudolf Steiner, *Philosophy of Freedom* p200 ⁱⁱⁱ

"The Elysia Commons is an ecosystem of organisations with an ethos of purposeful, accountable activity that meets the human being's yearning for meaningful work."

The purpose statement of the Elysia Commons

The underlying hypothesis of the Elysia Commons is that life is meaningful and that human beings have a deep yearning to be meaningfully productive.

The quote from the Philosophy of Freedom is the crux of the quest for freedom. One is free if one is accomplishing one's own aims.

Philosophy of Freedom	Purpose Statement
value of life	meaningful work
aims	purposeful activity
determines and measuring	accountable activity

The ethos of the Elysia Commons promotes awareness of organisation purpose and invites enquiry in to individual purpose.

A spirit of enquiry opens up the heart and mind to meaning and purpose and may notice that we are all engaged in co-creating our lived experience. Trust may develop and, perhaps mixed with a good dose of courage, could even lead the co-worker on a journey from action authorised by external leadership to action self-authorised in freedom and co-creative in achieving the organisation's shared purpose.

The bringing about of trust in an organisation is a cherished prize that lifts the experience and productivity for all. However there is a moment of magic that must happen if the self-authorised activity is to be co-creative and not co-disruptive. The magic is the forming of agreement, an agreement that joins the free human being to the shared purpose of the organisation.

Freedom and Directedness

Each human being stands in relation to *self*, in relation to *another*, and in relation to *all*. The *other* being any other person and the *all* any group of 2 or more people (right up to the whole of society) The definition of freedom given above brings depends on individual desire, so it is possible to link in freedom based on desire. I, you and us; each different desire gesture: the self is *my* desire, the other is *your* desire, and for us it is "our desire".

When an individual is concerned about their own desire then they are free – but when they are concerned with the desires of another, for example when an organisation serves its customers, then they are *directed* by the desire of the other. In the first case the individual is free, but in the second that is not necessarily the case. In a system which is striving to foster trust through respecting freedom, the fact that the task is focussed on respecting the customers' freedom, is, at the very least, a potential problem.

The problem is solved through the *us* perspective; through agreements that each person makes in freedom, but which result in the purpose of the company being fulfilled. In practice organisational life builds agreement structures which every one in the system consciously and unconsciously is aware of. It is

remarkable how the moment a manager behaves in a way that doesn't respect the agreement structure, even if the manager is unconscious of it, the staff will notice and morale will shift.

Agreement Structure

The agreement structure is a non-physical, spiritual form and when everyone has the same structure in their being (imagination) and all willingly work in accord with it then a feeling of great freedom, energy and potency emerges.

In a for-profit organisation it is easy for "myth" to emerge that views the organisation as existing to make the owners wealthy (all may believe this, even though, the organisation is only successful as long it is actually serving someone else's needs.) This myth means that should the organisation start to engage with the concept of purpose then there is something very distinct, different and unexpected to be examined.

However, in a not-for-profit organisation there is much more likely to be a really high awareness of organisational purpose, and it is even likely that a very high percentage of the people involved are personally aligned to the purpose. This sense of common purpose can be very strong. This is very different from a for-profit organisation, but the human being is still the human being and still sets up myths, all be it, different ones. In this situation the myths tend to be around commitment to purpose and readiness to make personal sacrifices and they can be as intimidating, destructive, and a degree more difficult to spot, than in a for-profit organisation.

Good Governance

The Charity Commission produces a "Good Governance" guide which is very well written and is a distillation of well proven best practice. This guide is attempting to bring to shared consciousness a picture of how the organisation works. By engaging with it an organisation finds itself in the process of forming an agreement structure. Through this process there is a good chance of better organisational health arising.

In the words of the Charity Commission there are two parts to a not-for-profit organisation: the executive system and the governance system. These two sides are also reflected in the group of owners and the group of workers in a for-profit. In the Elysia Commons the struggle is to support the experience of co-working and co-owning such that all have the experience of being engaged in meaningful work.

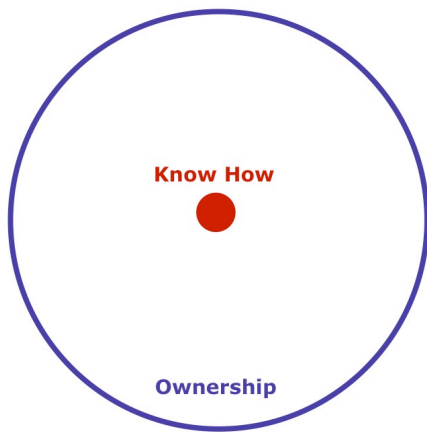
In a not-for-profit organisation the governance system can not be paid [check if always true]. There may also be volunteers (sometimes the same people) working as volunteers in the executive system.

In the case of a normal for-profit organisation the Elysia Commons adds a good deal of "governance" style support to the member organisation by taking part in the ownership of the organisation and making all members in the Elysia Commons co-owners of the for profit organisations owned by it.

In the case of a charity this extra governance support and layer of co-ownership is not needed because the charity will have a some sort of a board of Trustees in place in order to meet the requirements set by the Charity Commission. Because of this charities are self-owned and have no capital value, so do not need the asset lock that the Elysia Commons provides to for-profit organisations. A charity can not turn to the Elysia Commons to generate a sense of co-ownership in the way that a for-profit can.

Governance

Governance is the task of ownership. In a for-profit ownership quite naturally comes about through shareholders sharing power and profit. In a charity the purpose is known to be the prize and financial reward has a less distorting influence.



Governance stands apart from the executive activity of the organisation. It sets the strategy, appoints the executive leader and holds the executive system to account. Because a charity has no capital value it is this executive activity that the Trustees are the “owners” of. The governance task is like a case that contains the activity of the executive. It is the outermost container of the organisation. The executive is the activity that goes on within the container.

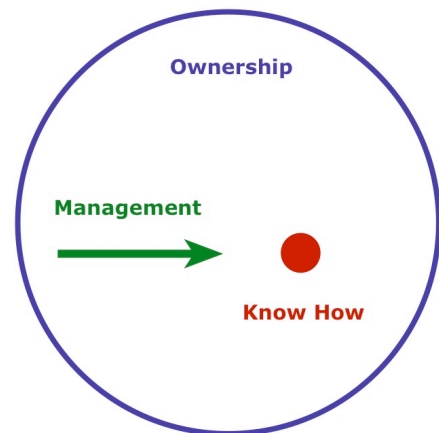
Executive

It is the executive that does the work, that carries out the purpose of the organisation. It is in this inner realm of activity

that it is quite usual for staff to become employees and be paid.

There is one more layer of differentiation, a way of further dividing the activity of the executive between the task of organising the tasks and the tasks themselves. This third layer is where people take up different jobs depending on their skills, capacities and personal resources.

In a for-profit organisation it is possible, if so desired, for everyone to participate in the ownership of the organisation, and that is what is brought about through a for-profit being a member of the Elysia Commons. In this situation everyone in the organisation has the experience of co-working and co-owning.



In a not-for-profit the ownership is so clearly located in the governance structure of the Trustee Group that the experience of the Trustees is very much co-owning, and the experience of the executive is of co-working. In the 3rd sector, with the high emotional engagement and an ethos of engagement and sharing, this separation can become hard to understand and even see.

The Spiritual Hierarchies

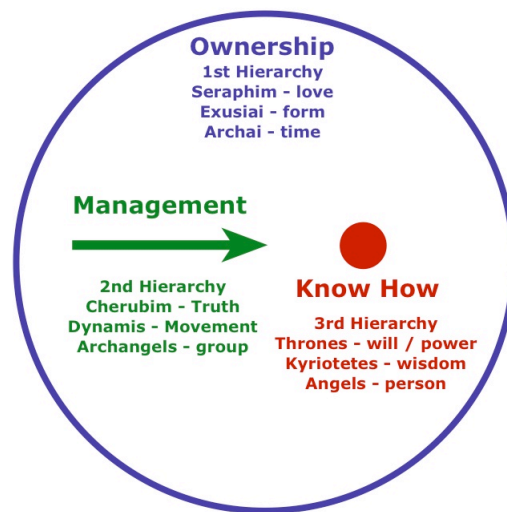
There is a real difference between the Governance and Executive systems although in charities that difference can become hard to see. However, the picture of how the Spiritual Hierarchies work together gives us a sense of the wisdom of understanding and consciously developing the agreement structure for our organisations that picks out the boundary between governance and executive.

Building again on the paper *Spiritual Background to Organisational Life*, it is possible to notice how the three tasks of containing, organising and doing are poured from Hierarchy to Hierarchy.

The task of ownership is carried by the 1st Hierarchy as a whole, but within each Hierarchy the Seraphim cascade love down through creation, the Spirits of Form hold the container, and the Archai hold the purpose of the time.

The task of organisation is carried by the 2nd Hierarchy as a whole, but within each Hierarchy the Cherubim pour the power of truth down through creation, the Spirits of Movement bring the organisation in to purposeful activity, and the Archangels hold consciousness of the team.

The job of delivering our world creation itself is done by the 3rd Hierarchy, but within each Hierarchy the Thrones pour the force of Will down through creation, whilst the Spirits of Wisdom carry the skills we need to get the job done and the Angels support us as we carry out our work.



The Elysia Commons

The Elysia Commons does not need to play the same role for a charity as it does for a profit making organisation. However it can, through its membership services, take some of the administrative burden, through the community of life of the Commons provide support and resources, and from it's pictures of harmonious organisational life offer guidance.

ⁱ "For Profit" in the Elysia Commons, Sebastian Parsons. Pending publication.

ⁱⁱ *Spiritual Background to Organisational Life*, Tom Ravetz published by the Elysia Commons, March 2011

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Philosophy of Freedom*, Rudolf Steiner, Published Rudolf Steiner Press 2001