

„Courage to Tread New Paths“

An Essay by Founder Dr. h. c. Peter Schnell on the Motivations of the Software AG Foundation's Activities

When one looks at the world today, unblinded by prejudice, wishful thinking, or ambition, then one sees in the public sphere, primarily in the media, the uncontrolled influence of materialistic ideas that threaten to penetrate all spheres of human existence.

In the last 200 years, the natural sciences have used the methods of material analysis – analysis of the physical world – to describe an enormous body of phenomena and laws. Based on these findings, natural science has developed an enormous field of fascinating technology, for the most part willingly adopted. In this, it has done something extraordinary.

Natural science has not, however, limited itself to its own field but has created for human beings, enthralled by their fascination with technology, an entire theoretical worldview. This is how materialism developed, which for most people suggested implied claims of exclusivity for the material forces and effects in the world, in the form of physical forces. Today, the prevailing dogma of natural science can be briefly formulated as “Only those things are real that can be measured with technical apparatuses.”

This worldview, which views even the human being as a mere



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biological apparatus, has a destructive effect, as one can easily verify by looking at the current world situation. This material worldview depends on and encourages egoism. Egoism is the force behind, among other things, the pursuit of power and dominance, the pursuit of possessions, the pursuit of prestige and recognition, the obsession with economic growth – in short, behind all antisocial behavior. This egoism is visible everywhere and is even propagandized as an economic stimulus; but it is also the source of social Darwinism, that is, our war on each other. Now, there are other people in the world besides the egotistical social Darwinists; more and more people are beginning to question their worldviews.

In various areas of society, from pedagogy to the entire culture establishment and even in the natural sciences, humans are beginning to feel that the old, familiar and accustomed answers provided by the material sciences industry no longer have exclusive validity or general validity.

People are looking for different answers to pressing questions regarding social development and potential. Often, these contemporaries are acting quietly, on their own initiative, in community; through spiritual insight, they are creating healing social impulses and caring for others, whether needy or inexperienced. These activities release great healing power for the future of humanity, for these individuals are putting the interests of fellow human beings before their own.

We as a foundation seek and find people or groups of people who are pursuing charitable aims and working to creating healing impulses in society.

We want to give these people the courage to tread new paths and to find answers, sometimes unexpected ones; that is why we offer them our support with financing and/or consulting.

“Treading new paths” in the spirit of healing social impulses primarily means expanding our horizons of thought to include processes that are not physically explicable – processes that are taking place in front of us within all living things. One example is cell division: it takes place in all living processes, yet is impossible to explain solely with physical or chemical laws, if one looks not only at the phenomenon itself but also at the energies at work. Research into these energies must be carried out with a high degree of scientific thoroughness and consistency, and must avoid such rhetoric, theories, or sentimentalism that would relegate it to some “esoteric corner.”

One such path towards a “science of the spirit” is anthroposophy, which Dr. Rudolf Steiner developed and disseminated widely over 100 years ago. Anthroposophy is not a confession of beliefs, but rather a path of insight that cannot be spread through proclamation or suggestive propaganda. Naturally, research in this field cannot be limited to measurement with technical devices. That is why demands on researchers in this area are so high.

The field is very broad, and spiritual insights must always be practically applicable to daily life, so they can generate a healing impulse. That is why the foundation’s concrete projects largely encompass those areas of practical life where our support can enable versatile results and multiplying effects.



This is possible in **children's and youth education** in particular, and in training in general. Here, insights into human development from childhood to adulthood can enable child- or adolescent-appropriate schooling. After all, children are not simply small adults into whom information should be crammed as quickly as possible to make them big and smart.



Education is “not the filling of a vessel, but the lighting of a fire,” to quote Heraclitus. At the heart of education must be personality development, that is, the individual human being. The student must understand how he learns, and why he learns; he needs role models. Many reform pedagogical schools, particularly Waldorf kindergartens and Waldorf schools, make an intense effort to achieve this ideal – without attempting to be “perfect.”

Another field of activity for the Software AG Foundation is **special education and social therapy**. Here, insights into the spiritual nature of the human being allow us offer pedagogically-based, practical assistance to those who are, on account of disability, in need of special “care of the soul.” This includes not only “the disabled” in the old sense, but also those who have suffered spiritual impairment on account of family difficulties or other challenging circumstances and who are no longer able to participate fully in the life of the society.

These individuals must be reconnected to society in such a way that they experience personal development and can find new perspectives.

Another, totally different field is that of **anthroposophical medicine and therapies**. These must be developed and tested on the one hand at the highest-available scientific level, and on the other hand using insights regarding the physical and non-physical organs of human existence. Today, these methods are being applied very successfully in so-called integrated medicine, as is widespread in the USA. But development and research in this field is an ongoing process.

This type of approach to healing will have a promising future, but doctors must have the opportunity to look much more closely, but also more efficiently at the patient in his or her individuality and needs; this is not possible in the usual “10-minute consultations” in an overcrowded standard medical practice.

Today, we need doctors who are trained differently and more comprehensively; and we need a clear change in the medical insurance system, which currently relies on blanket diagnoses and manifests a sickness-based business model leading to increasingly problematic bureaucratic regulations in the health care system. Here, we try to offer our assistance – including for the broader training of doctors and for medical research.



It is understandable that, in all areas of life, social and humanistic impulses – based on insights into reality and the effective means of the spiritual world – are needed in order to create a real, effective alternative to egoism. This cannot be achieved with intellectual speculation and theories; it must happen in daily life; the individual must experience it.

Since practical daily life consists of more than the above-mentioned areas, the foundation naturally also supports foundational research in other fields into those energies that cannot be fully explained by material and physical explanations. This is especially true of the **living natural world**. That is why we manage large projects that use so-called biodynamic agriculture to help ensure that future generations still have a foundation for food farming. The purely quantity-oriented industrialization of agriculture in the past 60-plus years, with its many shortcomings and “side effects,” is a dead-end road and an underappreciated danger for the future of humanity.

That is why we support the breeding of stable varieties of plants (grains, vegetables, etc.) that produce viable seeds for the following year's crops – as has been done for thousands of years. The production of hybrid varieties or genetically manipulated plants that can only be propagated for one or two years, or that require highly toxic chemicals to grow at all, does not lead to greater world food security, but is leading us in the wrong direction.

If one wants to farm successfully in the long-term (over hundreds of years), one must fathom and embrace the laws governing the balancing processes in nature. One cannot set forces in

motion whose end results cannot be foreseen, or that aim only at increasing short-term production in industrial agriculture, while setting our future at risk.

The tactics celebrated in the agricultural industry today will no longer function 100 years from now and are therefore a dangerous trend that has its roots in a material worldview. That is why in our support efforts, especially in the area of agriculture, we turn our eyes to long-term sustainability and the spirit of true nature conservation as the foundation of human life, both in maintaining the variety of cultivated plants and in animal breeding.

The list of the practical areas supported by the Software AG Foundation is long, but almost always focuses on living processes, for these must be experienced and understood in the present moment. One needs to understand the principal difference between animate and inanimate nature: a living being is not simply another complicated process within a system of material processes, even if that process is materially complex. A living being requires forces and energies that cannot be explained by material laws and cannot be derived from them. The time has come to research and understand these energies. But this cannot be done with the theory-building approach of the natural sciences; it demands a new approach, a science of the spirit.

