

overwhelmed by a feeling that he found impossible to describe but that seemed to recognize Steiner as the representative of the very universalism for which his threefold idea called. Courtney formed an inner resolve to devote himself to nurturing in America the idea of the threefold social order....

In November 1923 Courtney founded the Threefold Group.... The purchase of the Spring Valley farm in 1926 provided a landscape close enough to Manhattan to allow them to engage fully in an effort to renew both nature and culture. But the Arcadians assembled at Threefold Farm were far from going “back to Nature.” Rather than seeking to be redeemed by Nature, they sought to become redeemers of Nature, aiming to reclaim for human beings their central role as the intermediaries between the sensible and supersensible worlds. While their contemporaries just a few miles away in Harriman Park were reshaping the physical landscape in hopes of drawing modern metropolitans into closer contact with the sensible, the Threefold anthroposophists directed their efforts at a wholly supersensible landscape. In 1924, when Rudolf Steiner had carried out the rededication of the General Anthroposophical Society, he had declared: “This anthroposophical movement is not an earthly service; this anthroposophical movement, in every detail of its totality, is a divine service, a service of the gods.” ...

The audience for the evening lecture that Sunday in 1933 was very large, as it was to be the first American lecture given by Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, who had pioneered the Biologic Dynamic agriculture practiced at Threefold Farm.... Enlisting at age eighteen in the German Army Corps of Engineers, Pfeiffer [had been] sent to the war front... In 1919, back at [the manufacturing

firm] Bosch, he attended a lecture on the threefold social order given by Rudolf Steiner to the employees at their union hall.... Steiner emphasized the need to discover new forces that were life-enhancing; until humanity reckoned with them, modern social structure would continue to mimic the disintegrating forces upon which modern civilization was based.... It was a hot summer day, and Pfeiffer noted that the long lecture had already left the speaker hoarse and perspiring. He asked a waitress to set a bottle of soda water on the speaker’s platform, and Steiner immediately drank it. From that moment on, Pfeiffer devoted himself to serving Steiner’s work. In 1933, eight years after Steiner’s death, he was at the beginning of a relationship with the American anthroposophical community that would echo Steiner’s twenty-five-year relationship with European seekers of a spiritual science.... For the next twenty-seven summers, Pfeiffer would open the Threefold summer conference and, along with the biweekly Sunday lectures he gave after coming to live at the farm in 1942, pour forth a remarkable body of knowledge about nature and history in his own right.



Ehrenfried Pfeiffer (right) with long-time co-worker Sayre (Sally) Burns in the 1950s.



American Anthroposophy

by Joel Wendt

Reviewed by William Bento, Ph.D.

Joel Wendt, self-proclaimed “outlaw anthroposophist,” has written a tract on anthroposophy in America that is surely to be read and experienced as bitter medicine. It is not for the lighthearted, nor for the die-hard traditionalist. His stream of consciousness runs like treacherous rapids through uncharted waters. He challenges the complacent mind and calls for an awakening of the “consciousness soul” in every one of us. Despite obvious shortcomings, it is a series of essays worth repeated readings. His forthrightness, honesty, and incisive critique on many aspects of the Anthroposophical Society provoke serious consideration.

Although Wendt attempts to write for both neophyte and seasoned anthroposophist, his intimate, autobiographical style is less than scholarly, more akin to “letters to friends.” At times he falls into a kind of “in”-speak. He refers repeatedly to essays he has previously written and to lectures by Rudolf Steiner and books by authors that have shaped his thinking, but he does not always give adequate references for readers to follow up. This said, I urge the reader not to be taken aback, but to read diligently Wendt’s thought-provoking positions. He alludes to open mysteries and gives his point of view with boldness and daring.

Wendt presents America as both a battleground of the spirit and as a potential sacramental chalice for the wedding of the new Sun mysteries with the ancient Saturn mysteries. The battleground involves what he refers to as the “threefold Shadow” and its role in allowing evil to hold sway in our time. The sacramental chalice relates the presence in our midst of the etheric Christ to the prophetic wisdom of the Native Americans. This fusion of the new Sun mysteries with the ancient Saturn mysteries suggests the power of love and wisdom necessary for overcoming evil, or “becoming one with the Good.” This vast and complex view of America is compelling, yet Wendt offers it not as a simple sentiment but as an outcome of a practice, a method of cognition that he articulates as Steiner’s basis for spiritual science.

No time is wasted in serving up the bitter medicine. The introduction offers a harsh but sober indictment of the Anthroposophical Society as Wendt points out three essential practices that he finds lacking within its current models and leadership:

- » the self-knowledge that can be derived from objective study of Steiner’s *A Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe’s World Conception* and *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* (or *Freedom*);
- » the understanding and practice of the “reverse cultus” described in Steiner’s *Awakening to Community* (1923);
- » and a rightful grasp and application of the Michaelic cosmic intelligence as distinct from its fall into intellectualization.

These points are not easily dismissed. I am convinced that

everyone involved in the Anthroposophical Society's many activities has encountered the lack of such practices, though they cannot be said to be completely absent from the society. Nor is Wendt's the only formulation of essential practices.

The first practice can be extended to all studies of methods of psychological introspection and inquiry, anthroposophical or otherwise. My reading is that Wendt means for us not to rest in the idea of study, but to take up a more concerted practice of the methods implied by Steiner's epistemology.

The second practice exists in many forms of group work which strive to lift thoughts and ideas into the realm of the spirit; it need not be in the specific terms of Steiner's reverse cultus. Often it is experienced as moments full of grace, and not necessarily attributed to some correct method of conversation.

The third practice is less likely to take place in print than in an oral transmission from the soul of one truth seeker to another. It is in the living word, not the printed word, that so much of the esoteric nuances of Michaelic intelligence can be conveyed; what is problematic is the notion that Michaelic intelligence can just be read and repeated as knowledge.

Wendt's criticism seems to be aimed primarily at institutional forms within the Anthroposophical Society. Exclusive attention to this formed aspect of the society can lead to a despairingly one-sided picture. It fails to acknowledge the life freely engendered among members who find in anthroposophy the light of human wisdom and the flame for their friendship.

The section following the introduction is titled "The Challenge." In it Wendt discusses the incarnation of Ahriman as the "outwardly dominant characteristic of this time." Readers who study it will at the least gain in understanding of the working of Ahriman, as the author demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of the subject. This section involves Steiner's definition of in the threefold ordering of social life, and Wendt points out with insight how the sphere of rights is currently being exploited, particularly the culture of media. I think he overreaches in pointing a finger of identification at Karl Rove, but he is convincing when showing Ahriman's signature behind much of Rove's engineering of the Bush-Cheney administration.

"The Orientation" characterizes the "inwardly dominant characteristic of this time" as the true Second Coming of Christ, and Wendt recommends Valentin Tomberg's *Inner Development* and Jesaiah Ben-Aharon's *The Spiritual Event of the Twentieth Century* to supplement his explications. Among the well-phrased thoughts in this section is:

Gnosis without Faith is empty of Life; and, Faith without Gnosis is empty of the Truth. Only when we join them together, do we get: the Way (the Mystery of living the Good), the Truth (the Mystery of knowing the Good) and the Life (the Mystery of union with the Good).

Drawing on an article by Dennis Klocek in the *News for Members* for Autumn 2005, Wendt describes, in a unique manner, an alchemical approach to thinking through the four trials of initiation. He offers this as an aid for Americans to understand the "new thinking." Such metaphors as the music of discipleship and the joyous celebration of sacramental thinking are well

grounded and quite accessible. Presenting an American path for transforming the social sciences and the Anthroposophical Society in America, Wendt relies primarily on European resources. I will not fault him for the resources he emphasizes, but such reliance on Europe was a complaint he himself made at the outset. His scant remarks about Ralph Waldo Emerson and American thinkers of the last two centuries is a troubling omission.

Wendt homes in on the challenge of facing the inner evil that

finds its expression in our social life. He offers many interesting perspectives and potential solutions to this problem, but I take issue with his solipsistic use of the terms *double* and *shadow* which perpetuates the confusion between these concepts. This subject deserves a book of its own, exploring the different doubles Steiner referred to in his lectures and the Jungian concept of shadow and its current usage.

In the section titled "Encountering the Mystery of America," Wendt delivers a riveting articulation of the Hopi prophecy. He implies that the "True White Brother" coming from the East bearing the "rose-cross" refers symbolically to anthroposophy, its foundation stone, and its task to proclaim the Second Coming of

Christ. This perspective is a timely and illuminating contribution to spiritual-scientific research and one of Wendt's most relevant additions to an American anthroposophy.

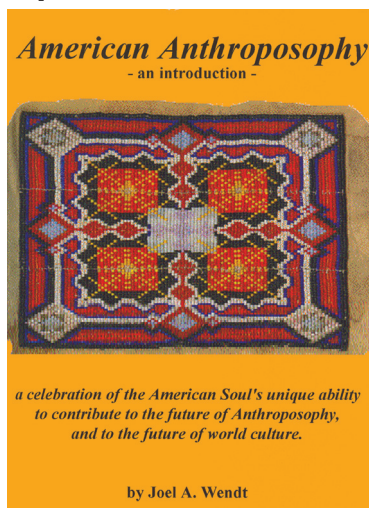
This section is followed by a critique of the Russian anthroposophist Sergei Prokofieff and many of his admirers, who are said to espouse a form of Steiner idolatry. Wendt perceives this influence as a significant barrier to truly understanding the core principles of a practiced anthroposophy:

Real knowledge never comes through another, but only out of our own activity such that we are able to unite experience (percept) and thought (concept), which is a major reason why Steiner repeatedly insisted we not use him as an authority (the other major reason is that we are not to make our thinking dependent on him; otherwise we are not inwardly—spiritually—free).

What this social process (*the almost universal assumption that a reading of a Steiner text provides knowledge*) means is that not only have we failed to appreciate the true value of these texts for enlivening our *understanding*, but we may have allowed this material to enter the soul as mere *belief*. In this way then the teachings of Spiritual Science become in the soul *religious—not scientific*, which is why I have been forced to use the term *Steinerism* to describe this *system* of beliefs. (page 233)

Whether or not one accepts this analysis, it is hard to deny that this type of presentation often makes anthroposophy appear cultish to others. The distinction Wendt makes between knowledge and understanding may appear to be subtle, yet it has huge ramifications in how anthroposophy is disseminated.

The latter part of the book addresses the theme of the new mysteries. Wendt proposes that we may conceive of Rudolf Steiner's work "as fostering in the Center the *New Mysteries of Man*," whereas in the East, out of its own intuitions, a fostering of the *new mysteries of light* may emerge. In the true West (the Americas) intuitions fostering the *new mysteries of the earth* may arise. His understanding of this task in the Americas focuses on the social and moral trials of our time. He does not explicitly



align these new mysteries with the Platonic virtues of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good, but he infers it.

His primary aim is to link the Good with the American task. In this regard, Wendt makes a poignant statement about the deeper reality of the consciousness soul age that relates quite specifically to the development of an American anthroposophy:

The moral freedom of the fully developed ego consciousness of the human being is now bringing about the ability to unite the I within the soul with the eternal—that is with the Good, while at the same time this reaching for goodness is meant to be the soul and spirit foundation for true *brotherhood*—for the new healthy social life.” (page 246)

Wendt connects this with the poetic inspiration of the song “America the Beautiful,” particularly with the phrase “... and crown thy good with brotherhood.” As he articulates the hindrances to achieving the Good, he further identifies the Ahrimanic strategy that needs to be confronted. A resource he recommends as an aid is Jesaiah Ben-Aharon’s book, *America’s Global Responsibility: Individuation, Initiation, and Threefolding*.

American Anthroposophy can be summed up as a passionate call for a radical catharsis to take place within the Anthroposophical Society and movement. As Wendt puts it, small acts of courage, of rebellion, of celebration, and of birthing the new mysteries are needed for an American anthroposophy to emerge. In conclusion, he makes a plea to anthroposophists in America to take three basic actions:

- 1) that we create a true history of our movement’s activity in the 20th century (spirit recollection);
- 2) that we take a deep interest in the Mystery of America as it comes toward us out of the future (spirit vision);
- 3) that we stop saying: *Steiner said* (a gesture only possible out of memory), and instead begin to share our own in-the-moment heart thoughts (spirit mindfulness).” (page 250)

For me the first plea is a bit perplexing. Is he implying that there are false versions of the history of our movement’s activity in the twentieth century, or is he asking a deeper and/or different question? Regarding the second plea, he has made a substantial case for its relevance; it could also be heard as an invitation for others to share research on the spiritual aspects of America and how anthroposophy interfaces with it. Wendt’s third plea amplifies a growing concern, particularly among anthroposophists seeking to build bridges with the world at large.

There are other valuable and relevant aspects of this book, but I have exercised my own bias to give as concise and balanced a review as possible. Books like Joel Wendt’s are too often put aside or marginalized because of their controversial material or because they are perceived as not politically correct. As an American anthroposophist I feel a responsibility to weigh in on such an important subject. My own approach would have been quite different from the way Wendt chose to express his ideas and opinions. However, I am only too glad to bring attention to the theme of *American Anthroposophy*. If in any way this review can prompt a dialogue among members of the society and movement about the necessity of a genuinely American approach to the understanding and practice of spiritual science, I will consider my contribution meaningful.

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Learning to Perceive the American Soul

by Joel A. Wendt

Rudolf Steiner had much to say in the course of his life concerning the division of the world into Eastern and Western cultures (Orient and Occident) on the one hand, and Eastern, Central, and Western soul characteristics on the other. It is important to distinguish the cultural manifestations from the soul characteristics. In this article I am only going to reflect briefly, and, I hope, deeply, on the particular soul characteristics of Americans; I urge readers of Steiner to seek to appreciate a certain subtlety involved when he spoke about East and West from these different points of view—in the one case about *spiritual culture* and in the other about the *general characteristics of the soul*. One way to help see this is to conceive of spiritual culture as related to *the history of ideas*, and another is to see

that matters of the character of the soul involve *the evolution of consciousness*.

There are many possible approaches to perceiving the American soul, one of which is reading books and pamphlets. These could include (but not be limited to) Carl Stegmann’s *The Other America: The Western World in the Light of Spiritual Science*; Dietrich V. Asten’s *America’s Way: The Tasks Ahead*; and F. W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven’s *America and Americanism*. These materials are, by the way, the work of European-born individuals whose interest



“Make no mistake, it’s not revenge he’s after. It’s a reckonin’.”
Val Kilmer as Doc Holliday in *Tombstone* (1993)

and curiosity about America and Americans can be very useful. At the same time we need to note that these authors did not possess an American soul, so those soul phenomena that can only be understood through objective and scientific introspective self-knowledge will have escaped their vision.

Another way to perceive the American soul is to look at American spiritual culture, past, present, and future, for such culture can be a kind of mirror of soul characteristics. Certainly, for example, the Transcendentalists are worth a good look, and we can ask a significant question by wondering whether and in what way Transcendentalism is similar to or different from Romanticism and/or German Idealism. Obviously, we can look also to Rudolf Steiner as part of this past.

For example, Steiner said in *The Challenge of the Times* that English speakers live instinctively in the sphere of the consciousness soul in their life of rights. He also said, in lectures to the workmen on 3 March 1923, that Americans come to anthroposophy naturally, while Central Europeans come to anthroposophy spiritually. An ongoing meditative contemplation of the concepts in these sentences can bear much fruit.

As someone inspired by three years spent with Carl Stegmann and the Emerson study group in the early 1980s in Fair

Oaks, California, I will try to bring forward as the heart of this essay a few of the more essential results of my own thirty years' spiritual research on the American soul.

My principle discovery was to come to understand that in the "Western," both in film, television, and novel forms, there existed a deep, nearly mythic, representation of the American soul (sometimes in American Studies classes this is called the "American character"). One could go into this in great detail, but here I only have space for a kind of sketch. Please keep in mind that in looking at American film, television, and novels we are looking at spiritual culture (various forms of expression in the history of ideas) and finding mirrored in these artistic expressions deep aspects of the American soul.

For those not familiar with American culture, let me recall some facts. The Western was a popular type of film right from the beginning of the silent movies in the 1920s. From television's arrival in the 1950s, the Western was a principle dramatic form that prevailed for decades. Western novels are less well known, but those who want to do further research may want to look closely at the works of Zane Gray. Some academics consider the hard-boiled detectives of film noir to be a translation of some of the antiheroic characteristics of the better Westerns into a more modern social environment.

Let's consider for a moment the basic plot structure of the Western (and somewhat, of the detective story). First there is in the community the presence of evil. This evil evokes fear, and thus paralyzed, the community is unable to act. Then enters



"There's no living with a killing. There's no goin' back from one. Right or wrong, it's a brand... a brand sticks." Alan Ladd as Shane in *Shane* (1953)

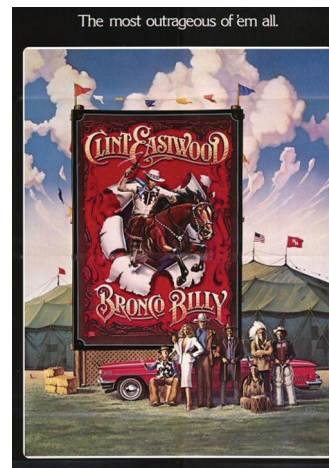
the lone stranger, who at sometimes great personal cost makes individual sacrifices that result in the removal (or taming) of evil. Often the community will not be grateful for this service, and the lone stranger (if he survives) might be rejected by the community. There are, of course, many variations on this basic theme.

The best modern practitioner of the art of the Western in film is the actor, writer, and director Clint Eastwood. While many sensitive souls will be repelled by the violence of the Western, we need to remember

that those individuals who are willing to face down evil in any community do so at grave personal risk. Eastwood's work is well regarded by his peers, and his penultimate expression of the Western, the film *Unforgiven*, won many awards. In the beginning the Western was simple in its use of archetypes, with the good guy wearing a white hat and the bad guy wearing a black hat. In *Unforgiven* the real moral ambiguity of the consciousness-soul age is fully present, for in this film there are clearly no good guys or bad guys. Eastwood in *Unforgiven* plays a down-and-out former murderer who is hired by some prostitutes to kill a cowboy who viciously cut the face of one of their friends while he was drunk.

This archetype of the cowboy is so subtly prevalent in American society that we often miss its broader appearance

and implications. For example, the elder former-president Bush instinctively moved to Texas in 1948 to step away from the reality of his father's family ties to a wealthy New England elite; he also moved in order to clothe his own young family in the myths of Texas manhood. One can find, among political historians of



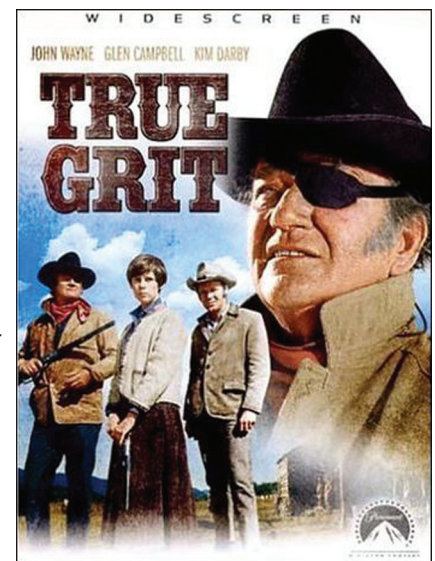
"You should never kill a man unless it's absolutely necessary." Clint Eastwood as Bronco Billy in *Bronco Billy* (1980)

America, insightful considerations of the importance of this struggle between the Yankees and the cowboys (the Northeast vs. the Southwest). John F. Kennedy was a Yankee and his vice president, Lyndon Johnson, was a cowboy. The cowboy is, of course, more in line with the true myth of the American character (soul) in the guise of *the common man of the West*, while the Yankee is more in line with the elites of banking—what some call *the merchant princes*—who are historically the inheritors of many of the former powers of the once-dominant

aristocracies of blood.

There are many other films that could be discussed, such as *High Noon* starring Gary Cooper (who was born in Helena, Montana, making him not only a natural common man of the West but an ideal personality for many of the films of Frank Capra, such as *Meet John Doe*). Clint Eastwood also made the remarkable film *Pale Rider*, in which, in response to the prayer of a young adolescent girl, a dead man (Eastwood) comes to town dressed as a preacher in order to confront the evil there (Revelation 6:8: "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death...").

Now hidden behind this somewhat mythic picture of the lone stranger and the problem of evil in the community is something more general in the American soul that can be described in this way: The American uses thinking to solve a problem perceived as social. If we understand that thinking is a spiritual activity and that ideas are crucial spiritual aspects of human existence, this use of thinking by Americans is not only important to perceive, but we also need to understand how the West is different in its



"I never shot nobody I didn't have to." John Wayne as Rooster Cogburn in *True Grit* (1969)

thinking gesture (soul characteristics) from the center and from the East. Here we have stepped away from the mirroring aspect of American spiritual culture and entered directly into the real realm of soul processes that can be observed through scientific

and objective introspection.

As anthroposophists in America we are more familiar with the thinking gesture of the center, which is not necessarily something good for Americans to imitate and practice. In the center, the thinking gesture stands between what is earthly and what is heavenly so that human beings of the center, in their social practices, want to incarnate the ideal. Their thinking takes hold of the ideal and seeks to bring it into incarnation. As a phenomenon in the Anthroposophical Society and movement we see this in habitual and semiconscious approaches to Rudolf Steiner's conceptions of a threefold social order. The social world is to be molded into the shape of this remarkable ideal.

When Americans try to do this we mostly fail, in large part because it is an unnatural gesture in the realm of thinking, although rooted in understandable imitation of our European brothers and sisters (remember, Americans are *natural* an-

throposophists). Just as represented in the American myth, the Western, the American soul seeks to solve the problems it perceives in the social realm and the thinking gesture then seeks to grasp those ideas that "solve the problem" (thus our tendency to pragmatism). First comes the experience of the social dilemma and then the gesture of thinking that seeks to heal it. Deeply introspective self-observation will confirm this, as well as serious Goetheanistic examination of the phenomena of American life and



"There are some things a man just can't run away from." John Wayne is the Ringo Kid in *Stagecoach* (1939)

culture.

Americans, then, do not try to conform social life to any ideal as do Europeans, but rather try to heal the social realm of its defects, and our natural gesture of thinking serves this need. We are first oriented toward what is earthly, and we reach up to the heavenly only as needed. We can understand this from social phenomena if we carefully recall the founding of the United States, which was prompted by multiple social problems connected to the evils the colonists perceived in the overreaching of the English aristocracy. In response to this we have Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1775); then the Declaration of Independence (1776), which led to war with England; and then finally the U.S. Constitution (1787). All of these were pragmatic attempts to solve certain social problems; in no way were they attempts to first conceive an ideal and then bring it to incarnation.

There is a very real question lurking in the background here that has to do with how the threefolding idea instinctively (English speakers instinctively inhabit the realm of the consciousness soul in the life of rights) and naturally (Americans are natural anthroposophists) arises in American political culture. As this is a very large theme, I can only give a couple of hints.

Some years ago (1991) I wrote a brief summary of certain beginning results of my social/spiritual research titled: "Threshold Problems in Thinking the Threefold Social Order." In that short work I observed that similarly to cultural life, which has three aspects: science, art, and religion;—and similarly to economic life, which has latent within it (although yet to be fully

expressed) a threefolding: producers, distributors, and consumers;—the rights life in the course of Western civilization came to comprise three aspects: the state, media, and the people. This made media, in its most comprehensive sense, the heart of the social organism (see also my 1995 essay: "Waking the Sleeping Giant: the Mission of Anthroposophy in America").

Media presently consists of an old fourth-cultural-age aspect that is still dominated by top-down, pyramidal, hierarchical third-cultural-age structures such as huge media corporations and the new media (Western civilization is dying into a new becoming) with its morally free (instinctive and natural ethical-individualistic) tendencies (e.g., the Internet) to create a functioning media anarchy. As a result, Americans' creative impulses have invented, for example, social networks (MySpace, Twitter, and Facebook, etc.) and free, creative media such as YouTube. These are the social growing point of a new, free media configuration and will turn out to be the best place for anthroposophy to become socially accessible in the future.

We need to visualize media in this sense as a dynamic, living social process within the total social organism. Recognizing the social necessity and inherent problems of media is a phenomenological and inventive approach to social threefolding rather than an ideological one that seeks to conform social relations to a preconceived ideal. It is within free media that new impulses (seeds) connected to the rights life will find their most vital social growth medium (soil).

It is also here in the heart of the rights life (free media) that the means to truly heal the social dysfunction currently manifesting in the world's economic crisis will be found. If we understand threefolding in a living way we come to realize that the center (the rights life) is an amalgam or synthesis of the cultural and economic spheres. These social spheres are not separate from each other but interpenetrate in a living way such that free media bears within it the best of the cultural (free spiritual life) and economic (brotherhood and sisterhood impulses) realms in a kind of unitary combination or synthesis (see Steiner's *Inner Aspects of the Social Question* for certain important indications).

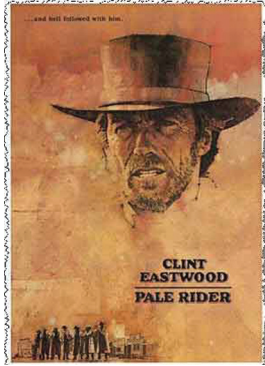
Another way to examine the difference between the "center" and the true West

(America) would be to compare the archetypes of Goethe's *Faust* with the archetypes of the Western. The American is not a Central European in his fundamental soul characteristics, and *Faust*, as an example of mature spiritual culture in its representation of consciousness soul questions, is inapplicable to the same consciousness soul questions faced by the more youthful American soul and spiritual culture.



"I've heard guns. My father and my brother were killed by guns. They were on the right side but that didn't help them any when the shooting started. My brother was nineteen. I watched him die. That's when I became a Quaker. I don't care who's right or who's wrong. There's got to be some better way for people to live." Grace Kelly as Amy in *High Noon* (1952). In the final scenes, Amy kills a man in order to save her husband; even she finds a "necessity" that causes her to set aside her "theoretical" pacifism.

Understanding this difference between the American soul and the Central European soul will also help us to appreciate today's split in American Waldorf education between the idealists who want pure, "ideal" Waldorf schools and the pragmatists who foster charter schools in order to make Waldorf education more universally available—seeing modern weakness in education as a *social* problem to be solved rather than as a situation demanding the incarnation of an ideal.



"Well, that Spirit ain't worth spit without a little exercise." Clint Eastwood as The Preacher, in *Pale Rider* (1985)

Now to round out our examination it would help to add the picture of this same thinking gesture as it tends to arise in the East (again, in the sense of soul characteristics and not spiritual-cultural tendencies). Whereas the West perceives what is earthly and seeks to solve its dilemmas, and the center perceives the ideal and seeks to bring it to incarnation—to build an artistic bridge from the ideal to the incarnate real, the East seems to want to remain united with the remembered ideal and leave behind entirely what is earthly.

Elaborating such a theme, however, might be going too far, because we are less familiar with both the phenomena and general spiritual history of the East than we are of these same facts for both the Center and the West. Thus my comments on the East here are brief, and are to be taken with a grain of salt in the absence of something far longer and more sophisticated.

So we have a powerful ahrimanic tendency in the West (a rich and vital materialism, with its obvious attendant dangers, including Ahriman's incarnation, that seeks to bind the ego to the sense world); a presently imprisoned Christ-oriented tendency in the center (the higher elements of the German spirit, for example, have been held at bay by the appearance on the social plane of the Beast from the Abyss within National Socialism following Steiner's death); and an ancient and powerful luciferic tendency in the East for merging the soul with a now rigid, overly ideal order that would then strongly inhibit the earthly freedom of the ego (the spirit), witness a continued presence of remnants of the caste system in modern India.

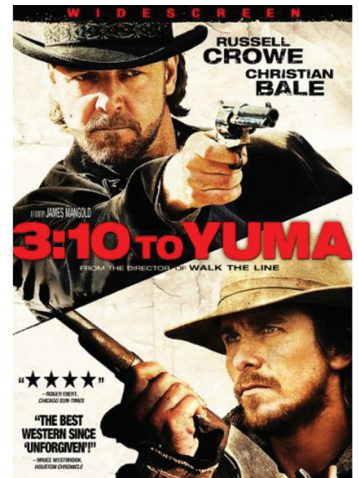
Rudolf Steiner has challenged us to understand this and to find a way that these differentiated soul gestures might *work together*. Each by itself is one-sided. Through our conscious co-working via international conferences on these very themes, we may discover the means by which the anthroposophical movement might offer true healing to the social world of humanity in a more integrated fashion. For example, far less urgency for idealistic Waldorf schools, and more support for local adaptations of the basic themes. For Americans, the path to this work begins with increased self-understanding and the perception of our own soul characteristics as distinct from those of the center and the East.

Without a deeper knowledge of our own soul and how it is differentiated from the other soul gestures in the threefold world of West, center, and East, anthroposophy in America will suffer. Already there has been in the society and movement here in America an excess of interest in European culture at the expense of coming to know American culture. Granted, Euro-

pean culture contains the heights to which Western civilization has risen, but this is of the past. The West, particularly America, is of the future.

Here is the English anthroposophist Terry Boardman, in the 1999 book *The Future Is Now: Anthroposophy at the New Millennium*, reflecting on Steiner's thoughts: "In his lectures to the West-East Congress in Vienna 1922, Rudolf Steiner spoke of Europe-Asia as 'the problem' of modern times and Europe-America as 'the solution'. By this he meant that Europeans were preserving the dessicated remnants of an ancient Asian spirituality in the dusty abstractions of their intellectual, political, and religious systems. The future lay rather with the will to create out of nothing. And this willingness he saw in the youthful energies of the Americans."

A first step in consciously manifesting this potential to perceive the American soul depends upon Americans taking up not only the introspective study of their own souls but also a deep and appreciative encounter with their own, albeit youthful, culture. The practice of anthroposophy, as we all should know, is about self-knowledge. We can, as an aid to our inquiries concerning the American soul, adapt something Steiner has said in a more universal context: We learn the most about ourselves (our American character) by studying that which is outside us (in this case American culture), and the most about what is outside us (American culture) by studying ourselves (our personal version of the American character). That we also bear more universal soul characteristics should not be forgotten, but if we want to learn to better perceive the American soul the above orientation will be a great help.



"Tommy was weak. Tommy was stupid. Tommy is dead." Russel Crowe as bad guy Ben Wade in *3:10 to Yuma* (2007)

From personal experience let me add one final thought. It is crucial to love any object of thought if we are to draw near to its true idea-essence. If we harbor antipathies to American culture—if, for example, we judge it as wanting in comparison with European culture—we will by that presumption disable our capacity to know, through love, the genuine and youthful creative heart of American culture. And, unfortunately, we will also miss coming to know something quite profound in ourselves as Americans.

Joel Wendt is the author of several books which can be read for free at his blog "Shapes in the Fire" (<http://ipwebdev.com/hermit/>). William Bento's review of American Anthroposophy, the latest book, precedes this essay.