



The Three Castles and the Esoteric Life of the Teacher

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We live in a time when human beings are called upon to wake up and develop a new consciousness. Before the fifteenth century, prior to the birth of the consciousness soul, one could live out of one's natural development. There was still a feeling that beyond the physical world, spiritual beings were active and working with human beings. That has not been the case for the last five hundred years. More and more individuals have felt cut off and isolated from spiritual connections. In the nineteenth century Friedrich Nietzsche described it well with the expression "God is Dead." Spiritual beings have not disappeared, but they no longer take an active interest in the human being's physical development. Their work has been completed. Now, in the freedom we so value, we have the task of offering spiritual beings moral impulses that come out of our own efforts. Only then will they be interested. It is not destined that this will happen. It is up to us.

We have many choices in this age of freedom. We can choose to consciously awaken moral forces within ourselves or simply rely on traditions for moral guidance. We can be apathetic to moral forces stirring within, sleep through life unaware of choices available, or even work against moral forces by inviting forces of evil into our souls. We can see evidence of choices people make just by reading the daily newspaper.

Teachers have a special responsibility to understand and recognize the perilous situation of our time. Our task is to create and foster a relationship with our children that will help them find their true humanity, allowing them

to make choices guided by an inner moral compass. In addition, we need to go beyond interest in students in our classroom to a concern for humanity at large, particularly in the context of the kinds of temptation that seek to weaken or even destroy the awakening ego of human souls.

Wolfram von Eschenbach, in his telling of *Parzival*, has laid before us great imaginations of this modern condition and the journey that the serious teacher can embark upon as a path of initiation.

In the legend of *Parzival*, there are three castles—the Castle of King Arthur, the Castle of the Grail, and the Castle of Wonders. *Parzival* and *Gawan*, as twin seekers, represent the modern consciousness-soul human being journeying through the three castles on a path of initiation. When I refer to the three castles, I am using them as images of three different ways in which the teacher is challenged in his or her inner development.

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Behind the Arthurian and the *Parzival* quests lie the deepest mysteries connected with the cosmic intelligence of Michael and soul transformation. Each mystery responds to the historical challenge of its time. In the path through the Castle of Wonders we have the possibility of transforming dark forces into light. There is no specific order in working with the three castles, since each relates to a particular aspect of what needs attention. The conscious integration of the three leads to healthy inner development. Through understanding what happens in each of these castles, the teacher can nurture his or her esoteric life in service of the Good.

**The Castle of King Arthur –
Living in the sentient soul:
finding ourselves in the social realm**

There are many legends around King Arthur, and it can be confusing to figure out which depict the historical Arthur and which the legendary one. The name “Arthur” denoted an initiate who had reached the rank of leading one of the Mystery Schools that existed in pre-Christian times and continued until at least the ninth century. Richard Seddon describes the task of the Mystery School of Arthur as being

...to carry into the Christian era the wisdom which the builders of the megaliths—during the previous age of Michael around 2500 BC—had acquired through their observations of the way the spiritual forces from sun, moon and planets varied in their passage through the zodiac. (p. 14)

Seddon points out that the name “Arthur” is Celtic, deriving from *Art-Hu*. *Art* means “to plough,” and *Hu* is the Welsh name of the Sun God who descended to earth, known to us as the Christ. Thus the name “Arthur” is “the ploughman of the Sun God” relating the star wisdom with practical work on earth. As Virginia Sease puts it,

Rudolf Steiner describes how Arthur and his knights experienced the sun in a quite specific way, and how they had experienced the Christ on the Sun before He had left it in order to descend to earth. The Arthurian knights had taken up this experience of the Christ on the Sun in their own etheric bodies. ... They took the Christ into themselves. This created a foundation for their mission. They sent emissaries out across Europe in order to battle the wildness in the

astral bodies of Europe’s population, as well as to purify and civilize it. (p. 23)

René Querido adds to this picture:

The Celtic Stream, even as it embraced Christianity, had never forsaken the cosmos. Because of this, as the strength of the Grail impulse increased (about the fifth century AD), it became possible for a group of men to appear who represented the cosmic forces in such a way that they were able to fulfill a world destiny. These men were King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. They stood, with King Arthur as the Sun at their center and with each king so embodying the impulse of one of the zodiacal constellations, that together they could act as a twelvefold whole. The Holy Grail was the ideal toward which their vision ever turned and which guided their deeds.

As a Michael community they fought to ensure Michael’s continued dominion over Cosmic Intelligence; they struggled against the severance of intelligence from Michael. They strove against the old demonic forces and on behalf of civilization. This community fought longer than any other that Michael should remain regent over Intelligence. This was the mission of the Arthurian Round Table. (p. 62)

As the knights of King Arthur took on the mission to purify astral bodies, we as teachers must take on that task for ourselves. It is in our work in the faculty that we are often challenged with the all-too-human qualities in our soul life: jealousy, envy, need for power, arrogance, judgment, gossip, and even a sense of martyrdom.

The three castles are used as images of three different ways in which teachers are challenged in their inner development.

When we picture King Arthur and the Round Table, we imagine a castle occupied with knights and ladies dressed in elegant clothing, following the rules of chivalry. In order to become a knight of King Arthur, one had to perform brave deeds, defend ladies, and kill monsters. When Arthur traveled beyond the confines of his castle, he would lay down a silken cloth that represented the Round Table. Wherever Arthur went, he and his knights undertook noble deeds that brought law and order to the realm. Thus, within our classrooms we continue the connection to the Spiritual Being of the school that we cultivate in the faculty meeting and in our daily meditation.

This work is represented by the sphere of rights—the relationship of one to another in the social community. Those who belonged to it were a brotherhood. The Round Table was an image of the zodiac, with King Arthur as the sun, radiating order. He was the king, the head, out of which streamed forces of the sentient soul, of warmth and good fellowship, which illuminated the social life of the kingdom.

Faculty members act as the Court of King Arthur, gathering around the imagination of the Being of the school and the Being of Waldorf education, as Rudolf Steiner described it at the opening of the first Waldorf school:

My dear friends, It is our duty to be aware of the importance of our task. This we shall achieve if we realize that this school is to become the bearer of quite a special impulse. And so, first of all, we must direct our thoughts towards the consciousness that something special is to be borne into the world through this education. Such a realization will come about if we do not look upon this act of founding the school as an ordinary everyday event, but as a *festive*

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act in the great ordering of the world. In this sense I wish to take the first step by expressing the deepest gratitude in the name of the Great Spirit who is to lead mankind out of its present state of suffering and misery into a higher stage of development in education and training. ...Let us look upon ourselves as human beings whom karma has brought to this place where something is to happen which shall surpass ordinary events—something which may make all participants here feel that they have witnessed a festive moment of world destiny. (*Towards the Deepening of Waldorf Education*, p. 53)

There are the special moments that occur in faculty meetings and meetings of the College of Teachers when we are attuned to one another, recognizing the tasks we have taken on, doing our inner work faithfully, and striving to serve the Being of the school.

Then we can feel something new has entered human social life, something that is only a seed now but that carries the potential for future working. This must have been similar for Arthur who was trying to bring about a new world order based on justice and law rather than vengeance and power.

Each faculty is a gathering of teachers who have been brought together by karma. They are charged with working together as a brotherhood, a sisterhood, for the benefit of the children in the school. This is not easy. The social life is the warmth mantle that surrounds each school. We may feel it when we walk into a school building or onto the school grounds. We may sense through the care of the environment, the quality of the children's work, the way teachers greet each other, or the way teachers and parents relate, that something special lives here.

Today, social and antisocial forces work very strongly in this area. When we live in the sentient soul quality, we are experiencing our “I” through the sentient soul in which surge astral forces of sympathy and antipathy. There are times when we stand in our individuality and at the same time experience ourselves as a member of a group. Faculty members can experience themselves gathered around the table, inspired by the Spirit working into their hearts as into a spiritual vessel. But at other times they can experience small cliques of teachers, making decisions out of limited interest sub-groups. For example, a school may be starting a high school. The class teachers say, “We can’t spend so much money on the high school. There are so many more things we need in the elementary school. We have worked long and hard and deserve this.” Or, it might be the high school teachers who claim they work the hardest and therefore need to be paid more. Or the early childhood teachers claim they are the doorway to the school and need to have more time to strengthen their etheric bodies, and so forth. Rather than speaking as one of the circle, each person takes refuge in his or her group identity. This also happens in relationships with parents. The teachers may hold themselves up as the experts and say, “We teachers know about this because we know anthroposophy, but you parents don’t understand it,” or “The College of Teachers has made this decision, but we cannot share the process with you because everything we talk about is sacred and secret.”

The esoteric life of the teacher in relation to King Arthur’s castle is to learn to be a true social being, bringing nobility and orderliness to the school community.

After Arthur was crowned king, he set about righting the wrongs that had been done in England since the death of Uther

Pendragon. He forced those who had wrongfully taken the land of others to return it to the rightful owners. He set free many prisoners who were unjustly held. He demanded that all should obey the laws of the realm. (Sterne, p. 19)

How would Arthur battle for his kingdom? The initiate Merlin guided him to a shining blue lake.

In the middle of the lake, Arthur saw an arm clothed in white samite, mysterious and wonderful. High above the blue water, the raised arm held a sword encased in a rich scabbard embellished all in gold. Arthur asked the Lady of the Lake for the sword, for he had none of his own. “Sir Arthur, King of England, the sword Excalibur is mine. If you will give me a gift when I ask it, you shall have the sword.” Arthur agreed and rowed out to the center of the lake and reached for the sword Excalibur. At his touch the hand let go the hilt, and hand and arm sank slowly under the water. (Sterne, pp. 26–27)

Arthur’s sword came from the supersensible world in order to aid in his mission on earth. Arthur was guided from infancy by Merlin, his protector and guide, whose task was to serve the good. In a similar way did Rudolf Steiner speak to the teachers of the Waldorf school when he said: “In the evenings before your meditation, ask the Angels, Archangels and Archai that they may help you in your work on the following day.” (Recollections of Caroline von Heydebrand and Walter Johannes Stein, in *Towards the Deepening of Waldorf Education*, p. 62)

Teachers in Waldorf schools often hold the ideal of Waldorf education in the highest place, even as a utopia. However, the difference between the ideal and the real can be very frustrating. To keep striving for the ideal can

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become a daily mantra. Yet one cannot have blinders on to what is happening between people in the confusions of everyday life. The ideal can create distance between colleagues, one of whom may judge the other as being “more Waldorf.” As we follow the Arthurian legends, we find that Camelot, the city Merlin had built using all the arts his magic could command, was also subject to human failings. Despite the ideals Arthur had so valiantly required of his Round Table and of those in his castle, the transgressions of Guinevere and Lancelot, the hatred of Modred, and the quick retreat from forgiveness to vengeance, made Camelot disappear from the earthly realm and continue only as an intention, as a hope for the future.

To be realistic, we can't live in paradise on the physical plane. To think that one can is an illusion. And yet our times demand that we strive to be social, recognizing that we have both social and anti-social forces working in our souls. But despite the challenges, we must keep trying to develop ourselves as social beings.

What does it mean to be a social being when we are constantly aware of anti-social forces in our own thinking, as well in the thoughts of others around us?

When we listen to another person, we are often not really listening, but instead we are thinking about our own response. We want to let the other person know what is on our mind. In order to hold on to our own thought, we resist what the other person is saying. We don't want our own thoughts to be overshadowed by the other person's words. We resist the tendency of our thinking to be put to sleep by the other person. A small battle rages between speaker and listener. But even if our thinking is put to sleep, our feeling and willing are not. In the contrast between our own thoughts and the speaker's, we wake up to ourselves. If we did not, we would go along with whatever the speaker said and we would lose self-awareness. For the modern person, this would be

intolerable. This dynamic between two people is mostly unconscious, but at times we become aware of how anti-social we really are, and we can hardly help it. Our own sense of self-love encourages us to make our own point known, whether by nodding or shaking our head in agreement or disagreement, or by stating our position without letting the other person finish a thought.

While half of our soul life is anti-social, the other half is social. Rudolf Steiner tells us that, when we are asleep at night, we are meeting each other and are united socially. There are no boundaries between us. However, the moment we wake up, we begin to develop our conceptual life, and anti-social impulses come streaming in. Sitting in a meeting, we feel that we already know what our colleagues are going to say, so we don't really need to listen. We build a wall around ourselves, knowing with certainty that we are right and the speaker is wrong. Most of us don't think we walk around harboring pre-judgments or prejudices, but they are working unconsciously.

What shall we do to bring a social impulse to this situation? We have to consciously master these anti-social forces, recognizing that people are not fixed but are always developing. We have to respect freedom of thought and not impose our thoughts on someone else. We have to allow people to question us without becoming our enemies.

The faculty develops the structure of the castle, the Round Table, which establishes the working relationships between the different members. The structure that is established allows for processes to take place. The structure may be hierarchical or horizontal. It may be constituted of committees with clear mandates given to each committee, or it may be administratively centralized. However it is organized, there should be clear processes that are agreed upon so that the group knows how to deal with issues as they come up. Having clear processes helps keep antipathy from getting out of hand. The anti-social forces wake

us up; they are part of the modern condition in which we treasure our independence, standing up for what we want. However, we need to look beyond our own desires to the life of the community and help create processes to bring balance and order. For example, what structure exists so that parents can voice a grievance without thinking the teacher will take it out on their child? What processes are there to evaluate an assembly without a teacher feeling attacked or at least unappreciated? What structure is in place for mandates? What forms of appreciation recognize people's efforts? How can we learn to be critical without attacking? How do we work with principles of conflict resolution?

In our feeling life we tend to distort the picture we have of another person, and negative feelings rise up. We are tossed back and forth between sympathy and antipathy. We can love one another for a brief time, but after that, something comes up, maybe from a past meeting, and we become critical and judgmental. Sometimes we aren't even conscious that this is happening. How can we bring healthy social forces to bear?

We must learn to know the other person more deeply so we can broaden the image we have been holding of him or her. Since most of our judgments are based on sympathy and antipathy, we have to go beyond them to a new understanding. Out of interest we must get to know the other faculty member better; what is the person interested in, what was his childhood like, what does she feel passionate about? How can we help a new teacher feel a sense of belonging with the group? Is there a good balance in the rights sphere between equality for all and times when an individual case needs to be considered differently?

In our will life we are also influenced by sympathies and antipathies. Our idealism can justify a feeling of self-righteousness. When two colleagues hold to competing ideals which lead to different decisions, it is important to recognize that each one wants what is best for the children and society. Trying to find a

third way may lift the issue out of the personal. Other colleagues can be helpful in resolving such a social problem.

We love a particular person because he or she does what we would do, or we dislike the person who does things differently. Most of the time when we think we're expressing love for another person, we are actually engaged in the illusion of love; it is really self-love. We feel proud that we sacrificed something of ourselves for the other person, but if we are really honest, we find we liked the feeling in ourselves of giving, enjoyed our own sense of generosity. It is a case of masked egoism, and we need to use self-discipline and self-reflection to overcome the feeling of being self-satisfied.

The challenge of operating in King Arthur's castle is to live horizontally, with the image of the King as the Being of the school. Of course, there may be hierarchical roles, but those are agreed to by the group. The true hierarchy is a spiritual one. The biggest challenge in this castle is the maturing of our social life in the consideration of the good of the whole.

Anything that prevents the human Ego from working out of the social forces holds us back. We need to put the interests of the other before those of self-interest as a new way of working. In King Arthur's time, the knights rode out into the forests to fight monsters. In our time we have to wake up to the monsters within and, in the way we work, make room for something higher to enter.

The Grail Castle – Living in the heart-mind soul

The Grail Castle is different from the castle of King Arthur. In order to enter it, one has to cross a bridge over a moat, leaving everyday life behind and passing into the spiritual world. Parzival stumbled into it when he was seeking his mother, not knowing she had died. Parzival did not understand anything about the Grail Castle. He was amazed by it, but he did not ask any questions.

Later, the hermit Trevrizent explained to Parzival the rules of the Grail Castle and its

connection with the Grail King, Anfortas. When the former Grail King, Frimurteil (Trevrizent's father) lost his life, his eldest son, Anfortas, was chosen to succeed him as king and Lord of the Grail and the Grail's company. As Anfortas came into his manhood, he left the Castle in search of excitement and adventure. The rule was that if any Lord of the Grail craved a love other than the one whose name came up on the Grail writing, he would suffer distress and grievous misery.

Anfortas went against his duty and was filled with passion for a particular woman. He bravely fought for her and won great fame and, in doing that, became prideful. This also violated the code of behavior, which required moderation in all things. His desires led him further and further in search of adventure to prove his manhood to the woman, and eventually he was wounded in the testicles with a poisoned spear by a heathen who sought the Grail for its power. Anfortas was still the King of the Grail, but he was wounded and could not carry out his responsibilities.

Of course, none of this was known to Parzival. However, he saw that the king was suffering, he saw a strange procession with squires carrying a bleeding lance, and he heard members of the castle moaning in deep anguish. He remembered only that Gurnemanz had told him not to talk so much, and so he did not ask any questions.

As Parzival continued on his journey, he slowly began to wake up. After meeting Sigune and recognizing that he had failed in not asking the question, "he felt a deep remorse . . . that he had been so slow to question as he sat by the side of the sorrowful host. His self-reproaches and the heat of the day brought the sweat pouring from him." (Book V)

When we recognize that we have missed an opportunity with a student, a colleague, or a parent, we may feel overwhelmed with guilt. Why was I asleep? Will there be another opportunity? How can I heal this situation? As with Parzival, we also can be asleep to another person's pain and suffering. A child in our class

may have gone through a difficult experience, but we did not notice it. Perhaps his favorite pet died or perhaps her grandmother became very ill. When we find out later, we may realize we had not been a careful observer and had missed an important opportunity to support the child.

Parzival tries to make up for his thoughtless behavior with Jeschute when he forces Orilus to reconcile with his wife. "Then Parzival did as a man who is true must do. He took the holy casket and swore an oath upon it of his own free will. And he framed the oath thus, 'Upon my honor as a knight—whether I have the honor myself or not, whoever sees me bear my shield will know me a member of knighthood's order—the power of this name, so the code of chivalry teaches us, has often won great fame and its name is still exalted today. May I stand disgraced forever before the world and all my honor be lost, and as pledge for these words let my happiness, with my deeds, be offered here before the Hand Supreme that, I believe, God bears. May I suffer shame and scorn forever by His power, in body and in soul, if this lady did do anything amiss when I snatched her brooch from her and took her golden ring as well. I was a fool then, not a man, and not yet grown to wisdom.' " (Book V)

When we look back upon our day during a "Review of the Day" exercise, we can re-experience our actions. At times we may feel the kind of shame that Parzival felt, and out of that embarrassment we may vow to ourselves to heal whatever pains we have caused. I well remember Cecil Harwood, one of the teachers in my Waldorf training, speaking about the mistakes we would make as young teachers. He told us that, at the beginning of our teaching career, the angels of the children would forgive our mistakes as long as we had enthusiasm. As we gained experience, we would become more personally responsible for our actions and might suffer because of our lost opportunities and feel guilt.

In Book VI three very important events happen that serve as guidance for the teacher

in relation to spiritual practice. At the very moment when Parzival is reaching his goal, to become a member of the Round Table, Kundry publicly accuses him of the sinful deed of not asking the question of the wounded king in the Grail Castle. “The fame and power of the Round Table are lamed now that Sir Parzival has joined its company, though he also bears, as he sits over there, the outward signs of a knight. ...A curse on the beauty of your face and on your manly limbs. ...May your mouth become empty, I mean of the tongue within it, as your heart is empty of real feeling! You adder’s fang!” Parzival, shamed, leaves the Round Table to seek the Grail and make amends.

Another knight, Gawan, is wrongfully accused of killing a man and must face battle against a powerful enemy. The chivalric code requires that he respond to such a challenge even though he is innocent. He, too, must leave the Round Table.

Despite the pain that the knights experience in this scene, they learn about the existence of Parzival’s half-brother, and they learn about the Castle of Wonders where four hundred maidens and four queens are held captive. In addition to the pain, the new relationship between Parzival and Gawan becomes one of joy and fulfillment that will carry them through the next stages of their journey.

In Book IX Parzival crosses a threshold into maturity. He meets Trevrizent and realizes he needs help. “Parzival the warrior dismounted at once, and standing with great modesty before him, he told of the people who had shown him the way and how they had praised the hermit’s counsels. Then he said, ‘Sir, now give me counsel. I am a man who has sinned.’ ”

After Parzival learns of his lineage, of the deaths he has caused, and of his relationship with Trevrizent, he confesses and begs forgiveness. Trevrizent’s reply is one that should be helpful to us when we realize our mistakes: “And you must not grieve too much. You should

in right measure grieve and abstain from grief.” As we take responsibility for our imperfections, we also need to forgive ourselves and go forward rather than live too strongly in self-recrimination.

The Grail Castle represents the scene of the Intellectual or Heart-Mind Soul. The seeker who enters the Grail Castle is challenged to spiritualize the thinking forces. Over time man’s thinking has become more and more dead,

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rigid, and cold, guided by old traditions and custom. With a one-sided development of intelligence, human thinking has given way to pride, haughtiness, and cruelty. The materialistic influence on thinking has led people to intellectualism. While

objectivity and clear thinking are a necessary part of the Heart-Mind Soul, the challenge of the Grail Castle is to enter on the path of developing capacities of perception. That is our challenge as teachers.

When we enter the realm of the Grail Castle in our Heart-Mind Soul, we find we are interconnected with other people in our lives. We are given the opportunities in daily practice to grow spiritually as we transform our thinking, strengthening our connections with the spiritual world and shaping our daily lives in alignment with our higher self. As we work more and more out of individual freedom rather than rules of conduct, we expand our soul capacities so that the work of the Heart-Mind Soul is transformed into Consciousness Soul activity.

The events connected with all aspects of the Grail Castle have consequence for the esoteric life of the teacher. It is both a lonely path and a path we take with others. Our inner meditative life is one that we develop between the hierarchies and ourselves. In our meditation we relate to the spiritual hierarchies every night.

- How I carried out my thought life during the day determines the way I enter the presence of the Angels.

- How I used my speech during the day determines whether I come worthily to the Archangels.
- How I used my movement during the day determines whether I come worthily near to the Archai.

In our daily behavior we must seek equanimity rather than excess. Moderation and humility help us as we stand in awe before the child, asking: “Who are you? What is your destiny? How can I serve you?” Steiner’s Six Basic Exercises or the Eightfold Path of Buddha can help us in this development.

Each teacher is responsible for acting out of the wisdom of transformed thinking and out of a balanced feeling life in interaction with a group of colleagues, with parents, and with children. We embody this meaning when the teachers are asked to:

Imbue yourself with the power of
imagination,
Have courage for the truth,
Sharpen your feeling for responsibility of
Soul. (cf. Steiner, *Study of Man*,
p. 190)

In our esoteric practice we must strive for the truth. There will be times when we feel wrongly judged by a colleague or parent. We have to wrestle with the wish to prove ourselves right, to strike back, to find some certainty in the midst of unknowingness. To strive for the truth without needing to demean or destroy the other is the challenge here. Opening ourselves to the gifts of others helps us to appreciate those we may have previously misunderstood.

In our work with the children, it is important to recognize that the soul of a growing child has come down to earth from a previous incarnation. The child is not an

accident, nor a mere product of genes. Our observation of the child and the child study we carry out in our faculty meetings lay the basis for our insights of how to work with each child. We can honor the gifts and challenges that come from the past. Through spiritualizing our thinking about the child, we build a picture of the child and his or her needs. Then we can understand that our task is to help clear away obstacles so that the child may meet his or her own destiny.

As we work with children, parents, and colleagues, our thoughts must go beyond our family, racial, and national roots. The path to the Grail is a spiritualized Christianity (in the broadest sense of the word) that welcomes all religions and all people. One truth has many aspects.

As Parzival is nearing the Grail Castle at the end of his journey, he meets Feirefis, his half-brother. Parzival is told he must choose a companion to accompany him. Although Feirefis is born of a Muslim mother and Christian father, and is himself a pagan owing loyalty to many gods and goddesses, he is the one who is chosen. Von Eschenbach is pointing to a future when a particular religion will no longer be the defining authority for transformation.

We are not only traversing our individual path, but we are deeply connected with our colleagues, the staff, the children, and their families. It is not a matter of our reaching a higher stage of development for its own sake. Once we have reached a certain stage on the inner path, we have to remember to take our brothers and sisters with us. There is no salvation for as long as even a single fellow human being remains excluded.

At different times in the legend, we see the importance of balance between the masculine and feminine in developing our higher self. Parzival could not have awakened to his task

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without the help of Sigune and Kundry. Gawan needed the wisdom of the frozen queen (his grandmother), the challenge of the feisty Orgilus, and the tenderness of the ferryman's daughter Bene to become a complete person. We do not work in our own king- (or queen-) doms. Every teacher, every staff member helps us on our way.

Those who approach the Grail must ask questions. This is an attitude of soul as we work together in a school. We may not have the answers, but we need to learn to ask the right questions. Sometimes the questions are uninvited, they stir up tension, but they serve the purpose of clearing a path to Truth. The path for the teacher who enters the Grail Castle is a lonely, individual path to transform ordinary thinking into spiritual communion. Then the transformed thinking can become a resource for the transformation of the school.

In Volume 8 of *Karmic Relationships*, Rudolf Steiner writes:

There ... stands King Arthur's castle where men still turn to the Cosmic Intelligence and where they strive to instill the Intelligence belonging to the universe into civilization on earth. And [there] stands that other castle, the Grail castle, where the Intelligence is no longer drawn from the heavens but where it is realized that what is wisdom before men is foolishness before God and what is wisdom before God is foolishness before men. (p. 39)

The intelligence of the Grail Castle is found on earth, no longer flowing from the heavens. It is here in our everyday earthly activity that we do our spiritual work. It is the inner path of meditation in which we deepen our connection to the world outside and the world within. Parzival had to learn these lessons also in order

to transform his thinking and be genuinely ready to stand before the Grail King and ask the question.

The Castle of Wonders – Entering into the consciousness soul

The Castle of Wonders with its surrounding region signifies the deepest mysteries of the laws of karma and reincarnation. Each of us has a Castle of Wonders: the dark places in our soul where shadows lurk and ugliness confronts us. We can also call it a Castle of Wounds, since we each carry the hurts from childhood and youth (as well as from past life experience) into our adult life. Often we choose not to enter this castle because it is so painful, and yet we must if we are to follow the path of the consciousness soul—the path where Gawan enters into initiation. To be able to enter

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the Castle of King Arthur and transform our social life, and to enter the Castle of the Grail and transform our thinking life, we must take the steps and face our will and our feelings in the Castle of Wonders. However, in addition to painful experiences bound up with the Castle of Wonders, there are also the possibilities of healing and joy. Many of the steps we take in this region are unconscious. We meet people to whom we owe karmic debts as well as those who need to offer us healing. This is the region where the ordering of karma can be set in motion.

In the Parzival legend, Gawan enters a new realm and is quickly filled with passion for a woman who scorns him. He sees beyond her outer appearance and he shows restraint and patience. After he has shown compassion to an injured knight and risked his life for her, the woman's mask is dropped, and a real love awakens in her. As Gawan continues moving through this land of wonders, he notices that everything is topsy-turvy and it is hard to figure out what is what. This is often true with karma.

As he is on his way to the Grail (a task given to him as penance), he reaches the ferryman's house and has to cross over a river to enter into the kingdom of the Castle of Wonders. Gawain has now entered into his soul world where he will meet unbalanced aspects of himself and evil forces lurking to envelop him. This is his path of initiation. In contrast to Parzival who didn't ask the question, Gawain asks why the four hundred maidens were locked in the castle, but he is told not to ask. When he persists in trying to find out why, the ferryman lends him a shield and tells him to arm himself.

As teachers, when we decide to enter into our own soul world, we need certain protection so that we can keep our center in the midst of travail. To serve life means we will be severely tested.

The ferryman tells Gawain to leave his horse outside and meet the trader, who tells him that if he succeeds he will receive all the wealth of the kingdom. When we enter the dark parts of our soul where imbalance and evil forces live, we have to go alone. Inside the castle are all the enemies of the Grail (of spiritualized thinking). When we overcome these forces, we receive the wealth of Oneness, of Completeness of body, soul, and spirit. The castle is fortified on all sides. How hard it is for us to take up the journey of initiation. Strong walls protect our vulnerability and flaws. Do we have the courage to carry on?

As Gawain enters the castle he sees the huge wonder bed shifting back and forth, and it is hard for him to jump onto it and claim it. He leaps into the middle of it, and it thunderously bangs back and forth against the walls. When the bed comes to a stop, Gawain is shaken and doesn't know what is coming next. The Castle of Wonders concerns the Word, the Truth. The banging of the bed might be like our tongue moving. There is an Arabic saying, "While the word is yet unspoken, you are master of it; when once it is spoken it is master of you."

When we begin the path of initiation, it is difficult to get a handle on the tasks. One may

try this or that, but it is too hard to focus, to carry out our intention in practice. We may decide it isn't worth the effort to master our will, it's too hard, and we return to past ways of relating. Then our work becomes hollow, for we are no longer allowing an opening for the spirit to shine, the angel of the child to guide us, the Being of the school to illumine us.

Back in the Castle of Wonders, Gawain is pelted with stones from five hundred slingshots, so much so that his shield is dented. Five hundred arrows are aimed at him as well.

Often when we enter the soul world, we find people attack us, misunderstand us, and try to manipulate us. We have to master our will and not react unthinkingly. We say to ourselves, "Patience, heart, patience." There are many ways we keep on the armor so we won't experience the stones and arrows—self-medicating through drugs or alcohol, losing ourselves in television, computer programs or social media, promiscuity, numbing our feeling life, or even leaving the school because we don't have the courage to face ourselves.

One of the most common means by which we get in our own way is through denial. Perhaps through our mentor or an evaluator, observations are made of our work, along with suggestions. It is difficult and painful to hear criticism. But how do we handle it? Do we welcome it as a way to continue growing? Do we deny it? Do we blame a few parents who have launched complaints against us? Do we say we were never told about these problems before? Do we go on attack, rallying half of the class parents to our side, accusing the school of unfairness? Legitimate questions are put to the school: Are processes in place to help a teacher meet difficult situations? What kind of support is there? What is objective evaluation?

Often one finds that a teacher who has difficulty in one school may have had the same problem elsewhere. The problem may take time to surface, but it will come out. It is another call for the teacher to take the problem seriously and do the soul work involved.

Gawan is beaten up by a thug, and then a huge lion attacks him. Gawan manages to cut off its leg, but he is wounded too and is losing blood. He manages to kill the lion before falling unconscious. He has almost lost the battle. It isn't a complete win because Gawan is badly injured.

In addition to the wounds from our childhood and youth we bear the wounds of our adult experiences. Collegueship issues can wound one, friendships can become betrayals, and lovers can become enemies. Do we retaliate or do we master our will and our words? Are we going to carry our wounds to our grave or begin to heal them?

The mystery of the relationship between the Castle of Wonders and the Grail Castle is expressed when Arnive, the elderly queen, who is caring for Gawan's wounds says, "I will quickly bring you relief. Kundry *la sorciere* is kind enough to come and see me frequently, and whatever may be done with medicines she imparts to me. Ever since Anfortas has been in such wretched pain so that he was in need of help, this salve has aided in keeping him from death; it came from Munsalvaesche [the Grail castle]."

By conquering the Castle of Wonders, Gawan becomes the master of the region, the queens and ladies are freed from their spell, and Gawan goes out and battles knights and proves his love for Orgeluse. When he stands up to her taunting, he reclaims himself. Orgeluse in turn is freed from her anger and sarcasm. She tells him how her lover Cidegast was slain by King Gramoflanz, from whom Gawan has just taken the wreath, and then continues and tells him the secret behind Anfortas' wounding, of Clinschor's evil, and of the bravery of the Red Knight who refused her love. Having healed the karmic knot, Gawan and Orgeluse return to the castle and are welcomed by the enchanted ladies.

Gawan has become master of himself as well as master of the Castle of Wonders. Now he has the presence of mind to ask Arnive, the

elder, about the origins of Clinschor's magical powers. Arnive tells him the secrets behind Clinschor's evil actions and how she and the other maidens had fallen under his power. But now that Gawan is master over Clinschor's land, everything can return to its previous harmony.

The maidens and the elder queens are now freed. Before, the feminine forces had been held hostage, frozen in time. When they are released, they can care for Gawan and bring him back to health. All who were frozen are freed to meet once again and deepen their relationships. We can ask ourselves: What is frozen in our soul life? What needs to be freed?

Without the freeing of the feminine, Gawan cannot allow his heart to rule. But he does heal his heart so that he will be able to give to others and rule with love and compassion. He is now the master of the Castle of Wonders, and in so becoming, all the women are freed. What a picture for us as we work on the negative forces in our soul life—bringing courage and heart-warmth to our inner struggle, thus freeing the forces of love for others!

The Castle of Wonders is entangled in mystery, miscommunication, and danger. This is expressed in the difficulty Gawan faces in his battle with Gramoflanz. His sister Itonje is in love with Gramoflanz, even though they have never met. However, Gawan is set to battle Gramoflanz. If he succeeds, his sister will be devastated. If Gramoflanz wins, Itonje will be devastated at the loss of her brother. Orgeluse wants Gramoflanz defeated because of the way he wounded her in the past. Gawan wants to defeat Gramoflanz to prove his love for Orgeluse. There seems to be no way out. To make matters worse, Gawan invites Arthur to bring the whole Round Table to observe the battle and celebrate his winning and his wedding. This situation is fraught with tragedy.

However, the elders step in with their wisdom. King Brandelidelin (Gramoflanz' uncle) sits by Ginover (Guinevere) the Queen and speaks with her. Arthur then leads

Brandelidelin away to the tent, shares a drink, and lays out the situation. King Brandelidelin understands. “Sir, it is our sisters’ children who will face each other in hatred. We must prevent the battle. There can be only one outcome, that they love each other with true affection. Your niece Itonje should first bid my nephew give up the battle for her sake, if he desires her love. Thus the battle, with all its strife, will be avoided completely. And do you also help my nephew to win the favor of the duchess.”

“That I will do,” says Arthur. “Gawan, my sister’s son, has enough power over her that she, finely bred as she is, will leave to the two of us, to him and to me, the settlement of the issue. And you then make peace on your side.” (Book XIV) Through this action of the elders, reconciliation takes place.

Self-mastery of the Word cautions us to avoid gossip, complaint, criticism, cynicism, backbiting, and even feigned politeness when life or the world seems painful, unpleasing, or difficult. Mastery of the Word calls for us to be authentic. Clinschor, the Black magician, created the Castle of Wonders out of a desire for revenge, out of jealousy, anger, and hatred. Gawan has to transform these feelings and become the master of the Will and thus free Clinschor as well as himself and the rest of the kingdom. Such feelings live in our souls, too. If we transform them, the shadows in our soul, the Clinschor in us gives up his power and the negative feelings can become kindness, courtesy, healing, courage, commitment, and love. We can point to the journey through the Castle of Wonders as a therapeutic path.

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The path of the three castles is an esoteric path for teachers to transform their soul forces. In each castle we meet ourselves on a different level.

Conclusion

There is a question that is left hanging in the Parzival legend. Could Parzival have healed Anfortas if Gawan had not mastered the Castle of Wonders?

Parzival is traveling the lonely journey to find the Grail castle again and to ask the question of Anfortas, the wounded Grail King. It is not a matter of knowing what words to ask.

Parzival has had to undergo soul transformation so that when he asks the question, it comes out of a deep longing born of soul sorrow. He has to be authentic. However, behind the scenes, Gawan

heals the karmic entanglement of Anfortas and Clinschor. I believe this is also necessary in order for Parzival to fulfill his destiny. Parzival represents the conscious search for wholeness and healing. Gawan represents the healing of what is broken so that the next step in initiation can take place. Reconciliation, love, and healing are essential if we are to go forward and carry out our destiny.

As Waldorf teachers we are also on the path of the three castles. We live in the Arthurian castle when we create Waldorf schools that are harmonious and orderly. We live in the Grail castle when we work on our meditative life. We live in the transformed Castle of Wonders when we heal karmic problems that keep us from being free to go forward in the future.

The path of the three castles is an esoteric path for teachers to transform their soul forces. In each castle we meet ourselves on a different level—on the social, in our thinking, and in our soul challenges. The three paths become one path, entwining thinking, feeling, and will as they interact and create a vessel for the “I.” In the crowning moments when the three join as one,

we become the new kings of ourselves, and we are able to represent the spiritual task of Waldorf education.

Note:

The terms Sun-Being, Great Spirit, and Time Spirit are used at times to refer to the Christ in the spiritual world, and not specifically to Christianity as a religion.

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