

The soul on earth who experiences a new impulse through initiation is symbolized in the figure of Elsa von Brabant. This shows us that the Lohengrin legend is among many other things a portrayal of initiation in the mysteries associated with the Holy Grail. Thus in the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, these secrets of the Holy Grail were taught in connection with the Christ mystery. The knights of the Grail were Christian initiates. [...]

The world and 'all it contains' is born out of the spirit; we are born, and called to rise to the spirit. Spiritual science shows us that the spirit lies exhausted in matter, that physical substance is the magic robe of the spiritual realm. Living as we do in the material world, it is our task to charm the spirit out of this magic robe. The spiritual finds its resurrection in the human being, in the human soul that rises above itself. [...]

## 27. The Parzival Saga as Modern Initiation

Extracts from various chapters in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, 8th edition, 1918

*Although there is no mention of Parzival or the Grail in the passages below, these excerpts from Steiner's seminal work on self-development are certainly in tune with and correspond to much that has so far surfaced. The Grail path as one of modern initiation in the midst of everyday life, and its invisibility and inaudibility next to the stridency and cacophony of much of that life, make such a path of quiet perseverance all the more essential today. Below I have juxtaposed passages from Knowledge of the Higher Worlds with small tableaux from the Parzival story that seem to illustrate some of the 'trials' which Steiner describes. While some of the stages of higher knowledge referred to here may seem beyond the ken of many if not most readers, including myself, Steiner invariably also roots these stages of initiation in common daily experiences which all of us undergo, and which he says are a real and firm foundation for further self-development. In other words, whether we are aware of it or not, we have all already started out on a quest.*

### *Initiation*

We can only fathom the mysteries of existence as far as our own degree of maturity allows. For this reason alone the path to the higher stages of knowledge and power is beset with obstacles. A firearm should not be used until sufficient experience has been gained to avoid disaster caused by its use. A person initiated today without further ado would lack



the experience he would gain during his future incarnations, when he could achieve higher knowledge in the normal course of his development. At the portal of initiation, therefore, this experience must be supplied in some other way. Thus the first instructions given to the pupil for initiation serve as a substitute for these future experiences. These are the so-called trials he has to undergo; they are in fact a normal consequence of the life of soul when exercises such as those described in previous chapters are pursued in the right way. [ . . . ]

The would-be initiate must come into contact with certain things and facts belonging to the higher worlds, but he can only see and hear them if his feeling is ripe for the perception of the spiritual forms, colours and tones described in the chapters on Preparation and Enlightenment.<sup>32</sup>

### *The trial by fire*

The first trial consists in obtaining a truer vision than the average person has of the corporeal attributes of lifeless things, and then of plants, animals and human beings. This does not mean what at present is called scientific knowledge, for it is a question not of science but of vision. As a rule, the would-be initiate proceeds to learn how the objects of nature and the beings gifted with life reveal themselves to the spiritual ear and the spiritual eye. In a certain way these things then lie disclosed—naked—before the beholder. The qualities which can then be seen and heard are hidden from physical eyes and ears. For physical perception they are concealed as if by a veil. The falling away of this veil for the would-be initiate involves a process known as 'spiritual burning away'. The first trial is therefore known as the trial by fire.

For many people, ordinary life is itself a more or less unconscious process of initiation through the fire trial. Such people have passed through a wealth of experience, so that their self-confidence, courage and fortitude have been greatly strengthened in a normal manner while learning to bear sorrow, disappointment and failure in their undertakings with greatness of soul, and especially with equanimity and unbroken strength. Thus they are often initiates without knowing it, and little is then needed to unseal their spiritual hearing and sight so that they become clairvoyant. It must be noted that a genuine fire-trial is not intended to satisfy the pupil's curiosity. It is true that he learns of many remarkable things of which others can have no inkling, yet this acquisition of knowledge is not the end, but the means to the end; the end consists in the attainment, thanks to this knowledge of the higher worlds, of greater and truer self-confidence, enhanced courage, and a magnanimity and perseverance quite different from anything that can generally be acquired in the lower world.

*Having left his mother, yet still naively following her instructions to the letter—with no knowledge at all of the world—Parzival has gone on his headstrong way and done some harm in the process, frequently breaking the code of knightly conduct. This seems reminiscent of Steiner's words above about the 'snearm' that can do damage. Parzival is somewhat 'trigger-happy' in his initial, disastrous exploits. Arriving at the castle of Gurnemanz, the latter sees his beauty and promise and takes him under his wing, giving him a set of moral precepts to follow and hoping that he will marry his daughter Liaze. Refusing to stay there, though, Parzival still feels he must accomplish greater deeds. The moral precepts of Gurnemanz, though laudable, are imposed on him from without*



and not yet his own inner possession. Indeed, one of them—to ask few questions—will lead him seriously astray when he arrives at the Grail castle. But Parzival has already started to break away from such externally imposed authority, as expressed metaphorically by his riding away from Gurnemanz to seek greater deeds and so become worthy of whatever destiny holds in store.

On this quest he arrives at the besieged city of Pehrapeine, which is separated from its attackers by a deep gorge crossed only by a wicker bridge. The defending knights let out a tumult of shouts to scare off Parzival as he approaches, and the bridge sways perilously; but undeterred Parzival leads his horse fearlessly across the abyss. The defending knights retreat inside the citadel at the sight of him and bar its gates. But he knocks, offers his services and is admitted by Queen Condwiramur, whom the besieging army wishes to compel, against her will, to marry its leader King Clamide. Parzival gains entry and welcome where mere force has failed.

In these brief images one can see the 'crossing' to a different kind of perception, requiring 'courage and fortitude'. The citadel of Condwiramur is a spiritual location which cannot be stormed by outward compulsion. Steiner speaks above also of 'magnanimity,' and it is striking that on entering the citadel Parzival's character seems to undergo a change from impetuosity to generosity: there is little food in the besieged city, but Parzival makes sure that the splendid meal prepared for him is instead shared out amongst the people.

### *The occult script*

The pupil may always turn back after the trial by fire. He will then resume his life, strengthened in body and soul, and wait for a future incarnation to continue his initiation. In his

present incarnation he will prove himself a more useful member of society and of humanity than he was before. In whatever position he may find himself, his steadiness, circumspection, resolve and benevolent influence over his fellow human beings will have greatly increased.

But if, after completing the trial by fire he should wish to continue the path, a certain script generally adopted in esoteric training must now be revealed to him. The true esoteric teachings reveal themselves in this script, because the hidden (occult) qualities of things can neither be expressed in ordinary language nor in ordinary writing. The pupils of the initiates translate the teachings into ordinary language as best they can. The occult script reveals itself to the soul when the latter has attained spiritual perception, for it is inscribed enduringly in the spiritual world. It cannot be learned as artificial writing is learned and read. The pupil grows into clairvoyant knowledge in an appropriate way, and during this growth a new strength is developed in his soul, as a new faculty, through which he feels himself impelled to decipher the occurrences and the beings of the spiritual world as he would decipher the characters of a script. This strength, with the experience it brings of the corresponding trial, might possibly awaken in the soul as though of its own accord as the soul continually develops, but following the guidance of experienced spiritual investigators skilled in deciphering the occult script, is a surer path.

The signs of the occult script are not arbitrarily invented; they correspond to the forces actively working in the world. They teach us the language of things. It becomes immediately apparent to the pupil that the signs he is now learning correspond to the forms, colours, and tones which he learned



to perceive during his preparation and enlightenment. He realizes that all he learned previously was only like learning to spell, and that he is only now beginning to read in the higher worlds. All the separate shapes, tones and colours reveal themselves to him now in one great connected whole. Now for the first time he attains complete certainty in observing the higher worlds. Hitherto he could never know positively whether the things he saw were rightly seen. A systematic understanding is now also at last possible between the pupil and the initiate in the spheres of higher knowledge. For whatever form the association between an initiate and another person may take in ordinary life, higher knowledge in its immediate form can only be imparted by the initiate in the sign-language described here.

Thanks to this language the student also learns certain rules of conduct and certain duties of which he formerly knew nothing. Having learned these he is able to perform actions endowed with a significance and a meaning that the actions of one not initiated can never possess. He acts out of the higher worlds. Guidance relating to such action can only be read and understood in terms of the occult script.

Yet it must be emphasized that there are people unconsciously gifted with the ability and faculty to perform such actions, though they have never undergone esoteric training. Such helpers of the world and of humanity pass through life bestowing blessings and performing good deeds. For reasons discussed here, gifts have been bestowed on them which appear supernatural. What distinguishes them from the pupil for initiation is only that the latter acts consciously and with full insight into the whole situation. He acquires by training the gifts bestowed on others by higher powers for the good of humanity. We can sincerely revere these favoured of God;

but we should not therefore dismiss the work of esoteric training as superfluous.

*After being admitted to Conduviramur's citadel, Parsival goes to sleep in a bed surrounded by candles 'as if for a funeral'. In the middle of the night, Queen Conduviramur comes to his bedside like an apparition of beauty. She kneels beside him and 'bends over his face', weeping in sorrow and hope for her people. At this Parsival awakens. Queen Conduviramur offers to lie with him, but Parsival refuses, saying this would not be fitting. He only agrees provided their bodies do not touch: and thus they lie side by side as if with a 'sword of purity' between them. Lying there, Conduviramur tells Parsival of her hopes that he will liberate her from the army of King Clamide. Before the sun rises the next day, she slips away. Parsival fights off and defeats the besiegers and frees the citadel. Conduviramur gladly receives Parsival as her husband, but they only withdraw the 'sword of purity' and consummate their marriage after the third night.*

*If we take the citadel of Conduviramur as at least an outpost of spiritualized perception, and Conduviramur herself as a metaphor for his increasing intimacy with the connected whole of a spiritual world, some correspondences can be found here with Steiner's words about the occult script. The ritual intention in the candles surrounding Parsival's bed convey his entry into a realm from which arbitrariness is banished. The mention of a funeral might hint at the need to die away from ordinary, sensory existence into a new realm, and it is interesting that this scene takes place at night, when one can be more open and 'awake' to the world of spirit. The image of Conduviramur bending over Parsival so that they meet face to face when Parsival awakens, suggests this awakening to a higher reality. At the same time there is an immediate emphasis in the story on rules of conduct and propriety—now no longer imposed*



*but emerging from within Parsival himself. This shows Parsival's increasing discernment and capacity to 'act out of the higher will'.*

*On the other hand, as is soon to become apparent, his initial success in this trial is mirrored by his subsequent grave failure to ask the redeeming question at the Grail castle. It is quite possible that any progress we make in self-development takes a long time to become fully integrated and consistently reliable in the psyche. In failing to ask that essential question, Parsival shows he is still, to some extent at least, allowing external precepts to govern him.*

### *The trial by water*

Once the student has learned the sign-script, another trial awaits him. This is to show whether he can move with freedom and assurance in the higher worlds. In ordinary life he is impelled to action by external motives. He works at some occupation because one duty or another is imposed on him by circumstances. It need hardly be mentioned that the student must in no way neglect any of his duties in ordinary life because he is engaged in higher worlds. No duty in a higher world can force us to neglect a single duty in the ordinary world. The father will remain just as good a father to his family, the mother just as good a mother, and neither an official, soldier nor anyone else will be diverted from his work by becoming an esoteric student. On the contrary, all the qualities which make a human being capable and effective are enhanced in the student to a degree incomprehensible to the uninitiated. If, in the eyes of the uninitiated, this does not always appear to be the case, it is simply because they often lack the ability to judge the initiate correctly. The deeds of the latter are not always intelligible to the former. But this too is only noticeable in certain instances.

At this stage of initiation there are duties which arise from no external stimulus. The pupil will not be moved to action by external pressures or circumstances, but only through adherence to the rules of conduct revealed to him in the occult script. He must now show in this second 'trial' that, guided by such a rule, his actions can have the same reliability with which, for instance, an official performs his duties. For this purpose, and in the course of his further training, he will find himself faced by a specific task. He must perform some action resulting from observations based on what he has learned during preparation and enlightenment. And he must recognize what he has to do through the understanding he has acquired of the occult script. If he recognizes his duty and acts rightly, he has been successful in this trial. Success can be recognized in the alteration produced by his action in the forms, colours and tones perceived by his spiritual eyes and ears. Exact indications are given, as the training progresses, showing how these forms appear and are experienced after the action has been performed, and the pupil must know how to produce this change. This trial is known as the trial by water, because in his activity in these higher worlds the pupil is deprived of any support from outward circumstances, just as a swimmer moves through water in which he is out of his depth. This activity must be repeated until the pupil attains absolute poise and assurance.

This trial, too, involves acquiring a certain quality. Through his experiences in the higher worlds, the pupil develops this quality in a short time to such a high degree that he would otherwise have to go through many incarnations, in the ordinary course of his development, before he could acquire it to the same extent. The essential thing is that he



must be guided only by the results of his higher perception and reading of the occult script, in order to produce the changes in question in these higher regions of existence. If, in the course of his activity, he should introduce any of his own opinions and desires, or should he diverge for one moment from the laws which he has recognized to be right, in order to follow his own willful inclinations, then the result would be altogether different from what should properly come about. He would lose sight of the goal to which his action tended, and confusion would result. Hence ample opportunity is given him in the course of this trial to develop self-control. And that is what matters above all. Here again, people can more easily succeed in this trial if their previous life has led them to acquire self-control. Whoever has acquired the capacity to pursue high principles and ideals, while putting into the background all personal predilections, whoever is capable of always performing his duty when inclinations and sympathies are only too ready to divert him from it, is unconsciously already an initiate in the midst of ordinary life. It will not take much for him to succeed in this particular trial. Indeed, a certain measure of initiation unconsciously acquired in life will, as a rule, be indispensable for success in this second trial. For just as it is difficult for those who have not learned to spell correctly in their childhood to make good this deficiency when they have grown up, so it is difficult to develop the necessary degree of self-control at the moment of looking into the higher worlds if this ability has not been acquired to a certain degree in ordinary life. The objects of the physical world do not alter, whatever the nature of our wishes, desires, and inclinations. In the higher worlds, however, our wishes, desires, and inclinations are causes that produce effects. If we wish to produce a particular effect in

these worlds, we must strictly follow the right rules and subdue every arbitrary impulse.

One human quality is of very special importance at this stage of initiation: an absolutely healthy and reliable faculty of judgement. Attention should be paid to the training of this faculty during all the previous stages; and this will show whether the pupil is equipped for the true path of knowledge. Further progress is now only possible if he can distinguish illusion, superstition, and every kind of phantasmagoria from true reality. This is at first more difficult to accomplish at the higher stages of existence than in the lower. Every prejudice, every cherished opinion with regard to the things in question, must vanish; truth alone must guide us. There must be perfect readiness to abandon any idea, opinion, or inclination directly logical thought demands it. Certainty in higher worlds is only to be attained when one does not cherish personal opinion.

Individuals whose mode of thinking tends to fancifulness and superstition can make no progress on the path to higher knowledge. It is a precious treasure that the student is to acquire. He rids himself of all doubt about higher worlds. They reveal themselves to his gaze in their full lawfulness. But he cannot acquire this treasure so long as he is the prey of fancies and illusions. If his imagination and his prejudices ran away with his intellect this would be very bad for him. Dreamers and fancy-ridden people are as unfit for the path to higher knowledge as those swayed by superstitions. This cannot be overemphasized, for the most dangerous enemies on the way to knowledge of the higher worlds lurk in fantastical reveries and superstitions. Yet no one need believe that the student loses all sense of poetry in life, all power of enthusiasm because the words: 'You must rid yourself of all



prejudice' are inscribed above the portal leading to the second trial of initiation, and because the portal to the first trial bears the words: 'Without healthy human reason all your efforts are in vain.'

*After his failure and un readiness at the Grail castle, Parzival continues on his way, and encounters the lady Jeschute whom he had so disgraced in his more wifful days. He realizes the consequences of his misdeeds and, through a further battle, reunites her with her husband and redeems his harmful error. Together they visit a nearby hermit's cave where Parzival swears an oath on a holy casket he finds there, claims full responsibility for his former foolish actions and expresses his profound regret. Jeschute's honour is fully restored.*

*In other words, Parzival 'performs some action resulting from what he has learned . . . and recognizes his duty'. No outward circumstances compel him to this action. He shows self-control and a capacity to distance himself enough from his former desires to acknowledge higher laws. He shows judgement and discernment.*

*So often though, one scene of success in the epic is mirrored by another in which it becomes clear that Parzival still has far to go. Shortly after this episode, Parzival finds himself wandering alone at Whitsun, with outward fame and inwardly unfulfilled. Though it is May the ground is, somewhat strangely, lightly dusted with snow. Parzival sees a goose being chased by a hawk, which pierces it so that three drops of blood fall on the snow. Gazing at these three drops Parzival falls into a dream-like trance, beholding there the image of his beloved Condwiramur. He is so 'far gone' in this fantasy that he scarcely perceives the knights who come to battle with him as he sits there, just waking up briefly to unseat them from their horses then falling back into his deep reverie. It is not until Gauvain covers the three drops of blood with a scarf that*

*Parzival wakes up to reality again and is surprised to find his lance has been broken in combat.*

*Through his preparation, Parzival has acquired the capacity to do the right thing (defeat his combatants) by deep instinct and by virtue of the power of the sleeping will. Nevertheless this scene, even though it brings Parzival a vision of his true love, also suggests something of what Steiner calls 'fancies and illusions' above. Perhaps because he is not yet inwardly fulfilled by an essential connection with the Whitsun event, with the deed of Christ as inner experience, his outer surroundings have an unseasonably chilly feel, as expressed in the dusting of snow, and his gaze is fettered by the sensory blood of the 'goose': the same name he himself was called in mockery and insult when he was expelled from the Grail castle.*

### *The trial by air*

Once advanced sufficiently in this way, a third trial awaits the pupil. Here he finds no definite goal to be reached. All is left in his own hands. He finds himself in a situation where nothing impels him to act. He must find his way alone, everything is left in his own hands. No things or people are there to stimulate him to action. Nothing and nobody can give him the strength he needs except himself alone. Failure to find this inner strength will leave him standing where he was. Few of those, however, who have successfully passed the previous trials will fail to find the necessary strength at this point. Either they will have turned back before or they succeed here also. All that the pupil needs is the capacity to proceed with his own nature swiftly, for here he must find his higher self in the truest sense of the word. He must instantly decide to listen to the promptings of the spirit in all things, without doubt or hesitation. Any hesitation would show he



was still unfit. Whatever prevents him from listening to the voice of the spirit must be boldly overcome. Presence of mind is required here, and training at this stage is concerned with the perfect development of this quality. All inducements to act or even to think which the pupil has previously been used to, now cease. In order not to remain inactive he must not lose himself, for only within himself can he find the single firm point where he can gain a firm hold. No one on reading this, without further acquaintance with these matters, should feel an antipathy for this principle of being thrown back on oneself, for success in this trial brings with it a moment of supreme happiness.

At this stage, no less than at the others, ordinary life is itself an esoteric training for many. Life itself has been a training in this sense for anyone who has reached the point of being able, when suddenly confronted with some task or problem in life, to make a swift decision without hesitation or delay: situations in which success is instantly forfeit if immediate action is not taken. Someone quick to act to avoid imminent misfortune, who has turned this ability into a permanent personal quality, has unconsciously acquired the degree of maturity necessary for the third trial. At this stage everything depends on the development of absolute presence of mind. This trial is known as the trial by air, because the pupil undergoing it can depend neither on external incentive nor on the forms, tones, and colours which he has learned at the stages of preparation and enlightenment. The only thing he can rely on is himself.

*After Parzival's 'fancy-ridden' vision with the three drops of blood, he is celebrated and acclaimed at King Arthur's court. The Grail messenger Kundry enters and publicly casts scorn on Par-*

*zival, accusing him of failure at the Grail castle—which was, as we have seen, ultimately a failure of compassion. Kundry piles on the insults and humiliates Parzival in the midst of his worldly renown, giving him a deep sense of shame—which is of course closely connected with the psyche's sense of deepening conscience—and enabling him to hearken more keenly to the promptings of his spirit. Though he is humiliated, this shame also acts as a spur to him to make himself worthy of the Grail. Following this episode Parzival disappears almost altogether from the epic while the focus shifts to Gawain. It is as if a deep inner process is underway, over which a veil must be drawn, during which significant changes are slowly unfolding. We hear that Parzival's sword is shattered in battle but is made whole again in the magic spring of Kamant, which suggests a radical reconfiguration of the soul's power. During his wanderings, he returns to the hermit's cave and re-encounters the leitmotif of Sigune holding her dead bridegroom, to which Steiner refers on page [37]. The cave seems to figure in the epic as a place of deep inner reflection and access to spiritual realities, and once again we sense that Parzival is drawing close to the Grail castle. After leaving Sigune, Parzival meets a Grail knight who charges him. Parzival unseats his combatant but at the same time his own horse plunges down a ravine. He himself barely escapes the same fate by grabbing hold of an overhanging branch. In other words, with great presence of mind, he finds the single firm point where he can gain a sure hold and 'acts to avoid imminent misfortune'. Taking the Grail knight's horse he finds himself eventually—again—at the cave, in the presence once more of the hermit Treuzient. It seems significant that he is now carried by a Grail horse, as a deep impulse of will which finds its true direction unswervingly. Treuzient now gives him a panoramic overview of earthly evolution and at last a real understanding of the deed of Christ and its significance. He also explains the*



*meaning of the Grail to him. Parzival stays in the cave for 15 days, meditating in great simplicity during this, the last preparatory stage of his initiation, and then assumes 'full responsibility for his destiny', thus coming to rely exclusively on himself. After this—having in other words listened deeply to what Steiner here calls the 'voice of the spirit'—he is free to continue on his journey.*

### *The temple of higher wisdom*

By successfully passing this trial the pupil may enter the temple of higher wisdom. Very little more—only the barest indication—can be said about this. The task now to be performed is often expressed by saying that the pupil must take an oath never to betray anything he has learned. These expressions, however, 'oath' and 'betray', are inappropriate and actually misleading. There is no question of an oath in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather of something learned by experience at this stage of development. The pupil learns how to apply higher knowledge, how to place it at the service of humanity. He begins to truly understand the world. It is not so much a question of withholding higher truths from others, but far more of serving them in the right way and with the necessary tact. The 'silence' he learns to keep is a quite different matter. He acquires this fine quality with regard to things he had previously spoken, and especially with regard to the way in which they were spoken. He would be a poor initiate who did not place all the higher knowledge he had acquired at the service of humanity, as well and as far as possible. The only obstacle to communication about these matters is the lack of understanding from a recipient. It is true, of course, that higher

knowledge does not lend itself to casual talk; but no one having reached the stage of development described above is actually forbidden from saying anything. No other person, no being imposes an oath on him with this intent. Every-thing is left to his own responsibility, and he learns in every situation to discover within himself what he has to do; and the oath means only that he is fit to bear this responsibility.

[...]

[The pupil] acquires the capacity to retain knowledge of the higher truths ever present in his soul. Ordinary memory would be unequal to this task. We must unite and become one with the higher truths. We must not only know them, but be able, quite as a matter of course, to apply them in living actions, just as we normally eat and drink. They must become our practice, our habit, our inclination. There must be no need to keep thinking about them in the ordinary sense; they must come to living expression through the human being himself; they must flow through us as the currents of life flow through our organism. In this way we will raise ourselves increasingly, in a spiritual sense, to the level to which nature has physically raised us.

*In the subsequent story of Parzival, he has two further significant battles with knights whom he does not initially recognize but who turn out to be Gawain, his comrade in arms, and Feirefiz, his half-brother. Only after fighting each other do they perceive each other's real nature and name. We will return to this strand of the story a little later ('Division of the personality?'). Following the resolution of these combats, and the conscious reunion of these three major figures in the epic, Kundry comes again as messenger to lead Parzival to the Grail castle, for his name now shines from the chalice as its new king. On arriving at the castle, he has finally*



endured and matured enough to ask the critical, compassionate question, 'Uncle, what ails you?', thus bringing redemption to the suffering Amfortas.

Here Parzival 'unites and becomes one' with the higher truths and places his compassionate knowledge at humanity's service, as embodied in the ailing Amfortas. In witnessing the Grail ritual again, Parzival is, one can say, engaging fully in an 'oath' in the sense Steiner describes it here: *The idea that one applies higher truths in living actions, just as we normally eat and drink' is reminiscent of the Grail as a source of nourishment and healing, from which 'currents of life flow'.*

### Chakra development

*This next passage from Knowledge of the Higher Worlds picks up on the theme of 'life currents' above. Recalling Steiner's references to the pineal gland in the brain as the Grail of the human organism which mediates the influx of spirit, we can see a relevance to our theme in the establishing of the 'centre' in the head. This later extends and descends to the larynx—and here we can also remember Steiner's vision of the future human capacity to 'create through the word'—and ultimately to the heart. The word 'beatitude' in this passage is very close to and possibly synonymous with the medieval term 'Saelde' (see page [144]) as the ultimate goal of Parzival's journey from dullness through doubt to bliss and blessedness.*

If the pupil follows the directions that have been given him, he introduces into his etheric body currents and movements which are in harmony with the laws and the evolution of the world to which he belongs. Consequently these instructions are reflections of the great laws of cosmic evolution. They

consist of the above-mentioned and similar exercises in meditation and concentration which, if correctly practised, produce the results described. The student must at certain times let these instructions permeate his soul with their content, so that he is inwardly entirely filled with it. A simple start is made with a view to the deepening of the logical activity of the mind and the producing of an inward intensification of thought. Thought is thereby made free and independent of all sense impressions and experiences; it is concentrated in one point which is held entirely under control. Thus a preliminary centre is formed for the currents of the etheric body. This centre is not yet in the region of the heart but in the head, and it appears to the clairvoyant as the point of departure for movements and currents. No esoteric training can be successful which does not first create this centre. If the latter were first formed in the region of the heart the aspiring clairvoyant would doubtless obtain glimpses of higher worlds, but would lack all true insight into the connection between these higher worlds and the world of our senses. This, however, is an unconditional necessity for the human being at his present stage of evolution. The clairvoyant must not become a visionary; he must retain a firm footing upon the earth.

The centre in the head, once duly established, is then transferred lower down, to the region of the larynx. This is achieved by further exercises in concentration. Then the currents of the etheric body radiate from this point and illumine the astral space surrounding the individual.

Continued practice enables the pupil to govern the position of this etheric body himself. Hitherto this position depended upon external forces proceeding from the physical body. Through further development the student is able to



direct his etheric body as he wishes. This faculty is achieved by currents moving approximately along both hands and centred in the two-petalled lotus in the region of the eyes. All this is made possible through the radiations from the larynx assuming round forms, of which a number flow to the two-petalled lotus and thence form undulating currents along the hands. As a further development, these currents branch out and ramify in the most delicate manner and become, as it were, a kind of web which encompasses the entire etheric body as though with a membrane or network. Whereas the etheric body was not previously closed off from the outer world, so that the life currents from the universal ocean of life flowed freely in and out of it, these currents now have to pass through this membrane. Thus the individual becomes sensitive to these external streams; they become perceptible to him.

And now comes the time to give the complete system of currents and movements its centre situated in the region of the heart. This again is achieved by persevering with the exercises in concentration and meditation; and at this point also the stage is reached when the pupil can hear the inner word. All things now acquire a new significance for him. They become as it were spiritually audible in their inmost nature, and speak to him of their essential being. The currents described above place him in touch with the inner being of the world to which he belongs. He begins to participate inwardly in the life of his environment and can let it reverberate in the movements of his lotus flowers.

At this point the spiritual world is entered. If the pupil has advanced so far, he acquires a new understanding of all that the great teachers of humanity have uttered. The sayings of the Buddha and the Gospels, for instance, produce a new

effect on him. They pervade him with a sense of beatitude of which he previously had no inkling. The ring of their words accords with the movements and rhythms he has now developed within himself. He can now have direct knowledge that a being such as Buddha or the writers of the Gospels did not give utterance to their personal revelations but to those which flowed into them from the inmost essence of things. [..]

The individual frees himself from everything which depends only upon the faculties of his own personal nature. He ceases to view things from his own separate standpoint; and the boundaries fettering him to his circumscribed self disappear. The secrets of the spiritual world reveal themselves to his inner self. This is liberation. For those fetters constrain the individual to regard things and beings according to his personal idiosyncrasies. And it is from this personal manner of seeing things that the pupil must free himself.

### *Division of the personality*

*Above we saw how Parzival meets and fights with Gawain and Feirefiz before fully and consciously recognizing and perceiving them. Though there is no scope here to illustrate it, these three major figures in the epic embody particular qualities and characteristics that suggest each is emblematic of a distinct power of the soul: Parzival, the one who 'pierces' through things with the linearity of thinking; Gawain, whose warmth of heart and also his battles with, for instance, a 'verrying beast, a lion the size of a horse' identify him with feeling and the astral domain; and Feirefiz, whose enormous strength, and command of a 'vast army' seem expressive of the will. Below Steiner describes how the threads*



*between the three soul forces are severed during higher development, and must be reunited consciously. The Parsival epic 'individualizes' them as separate figures, then reunites them very shortly before the Grail is finally attained.*

[...] Great changes take place in the pupil's finer bodies, as described above. These changes are connected with certain processes in the development of the three fundamental forces of the soul: will, feeling and thinking. Before esoteric training, these forces are connected in a way ordained by higher cosmic laws. Our will, feeling and thinking are not arbitrary. A particular idea arising in the mind is naturally attended by a particular feeling; or it leads to a resolve of the will in an equally natural manner. We enter a room, find it stuffy, and open the window. We hear our name called and hearken. We are questioned and we answer. We perceive an ill-smelling object and experience a feeling of disgust. These are simple connections between thinking, feeling, and will. When we survey human life we find that everything is founded on such interconnections. Indeed, our life is not thought 'normal' unless such a connection, founded on the laws of human nature, is observed between thinking, feeling and will. It would be thought contrary to these laws if the sight of an ill-smelling object gave anyone pleasure, or if anyone, on being questioned, did not answer. The success anticipated from a right kind of upbringing or education is based on the assumption that a connection between thinking, feeling and will can be established in a child in conformity with human nature. Certain ideas are conveyed to him on the assumption that they will be associated, in regular fashion, with his feelings or will activity.

[...] In the course of higher development, the threads connecting the three fundamental forces are severed. At first this severance occurs only within the finer soul organism, but at a still higher stage the separation extends also to the physical body. It is a fact that in higher spiritual development the brain divides into three separate parts. This separation is not physically perceptible in the ordinary way, nor can it be demonstrated by the most sensitive instruments. Yet it occurs, and the clairvoyant has means of observing it. The brain of the higher clairvoyant divides into three independently active entities: the thought-brain, feeling-brain, and will-brain.

Thus the organs of thinking, feeling, and will become individualized; their connection is no longer maintained by laws inherent in them, but must be managed by the individual's own awakened higher consciousness. This, then, is the change which the pupil observes in himself: that no connection arises of itself between an idea and a feeling or a will impulse, unless he himself provides one. No impulse urges him from thought to action unless he himself gives rise to this impulse in freedom. From then on he can confront a fact which before his training would have filled him with glowing love or bitter hatred, with no feeling response; and he can remain impassive at the thought which formerly would have spurred him to action, as though of his own accord. Through resolves of his will he can perform actions which no one who has not undergone esoteric training can see the slightest reason for. The pupil's great achievement is to attain complete mastery over the combined activity of the three soul forces; and at the same time, responsibility for this activity is placed entirely in his own hands.



*The Greater Guardian*

*According to Steiner, and described below, following this division of and conscious regaining of mastery over the forces of the soul, the initiate encounters a luminous figure of light. Though this figure is not further identified here, its luminosity and love, its concern for the ultimate redemption not just of the individual but of all humanity, certainly suggest it to be Christ. Here, then, as at the end of the Parzival epic—in the uniting of pagan and Christian through the figure of 'black-and-white' Feirefiz, who marries the Grail queen and spreads the Grail message across the globe—we have a sense of the ultimate future reunion of all humanity with itself, and with its highest exemplar and ideal.*

When the pupil has recognized all the elements from which he must liberate himself, a sublime being of light stands before him whose beauty is difficult to describe in human language. This encounter takes place when the sundering of the organs of thinking, feeling and will extend to the physical body, so that their reciprocal connection is no longer regulated by themselves but by higher consciousness, which has now entirely liberated itself from physical conditions. The organs of thinking, feeling and will, have then become instruments under the sway of the human soul, which exercises its dominion over them from supersensible regions. The soul, thus liberated from all bonds of the senses, is now confronted by the second Guardian of the Threshold who speaks somewhat as follows:

*You have released yourself from the world of the senses. You have your rightful place in the supersensible world. You can now work out of this world. For your own sake, you no longer*

*require your physical body in its present form. If your intention were merely to acquire the faculties necessary for life in the supersensible world, you no longer need return to the sense world. But now, gaze on me. See how immeasurably I am raised above all that you have made of yourself up to now. You have attained your present degree of perfection through the faculties you were able to develop in the sense world as long as you were still dependent on it. But now an era must begin for you when your liberated powers will work further in the world of the senses. So far you have only achieved self-realization; but now, having become free yourself, you can liberate all your companions in the sense world. Until now you have striven as an individual; now make yourself a member of the whole so that you bring into the supersensible world not yourself alone but everything else that exists in the world of the senses. You will some day be able to unite with me, but I cannot find blessedness as long as others are still unredeemed! As a liberated individual you could enter immediately into the supersensible spheres, but then you would be obliged to gaze down upon all the unredeemed beings in the sense world. You would have separated your destiny from theirs. But you are all interconnected; you all had to descend into the sense world in order to gather from it powers needed for the higher world. If you separate yourself from the others you will misuse the powers you have been able to develop only in association with them. If they had not descended, then nor could you have done so; without them the powers needed for your supersensible existence would be lacking. You must now share with the others the powers you acquired in their company. I therefore forbid you admission into the highest regions of the supersensible world as long as you have not applied the powers you have acquired to the*



*redemption of the world to which you belong. With the powers you have already achieved you may sojourn in the lower regions of the supersensible world; but before the portal of the higher spheres I stand (as the Cherubin with fiery sword at the gates of paradise) and I forbid you to enter as long as you retain powers that have not been put to use in the sense world. And if you will not apply your powers in this way, others coming after you will. Then a higher supersensible world will receive all the fruits of the sense world, but the ground in which you were rooted will be withdrawn from you. [...]*

An indescribable splendour radiates from the second Guardian; union with him lies as a far distant ideal before the eye of the soul. Yet there is also a certainty that this union will not be possible until all the powers which have come to the initiate from this world are applied by him to liberating and redeeming it. If he resolves to fulfil the demands of this higher being of light, the initiate will be able to contribute to the liberation of the human race. He brings his gifts to the altar of humanity. [...]

## 28. Humanity Resurrected

Extract from a lecture given in Cologne on 11 April 1909

*The final passage in this volume offers an eloquent summation of many of its themes and a panoramic view of humanity's possible future development towards the 'eternal I', to which, if we allow it, a science of the spirit can summon us. The ailing Amyntas in us, both as individuals and as the whole of humanity, can be healed if we open ourselves to the source of healing we already bear within us as potential through Christ's deed.*

[...] If, 600 years before our era, entrance into the physical augured suffering for human beings, how does the great truth that life is suffering present itself to the soul after the Mystery of Golgotha? How does it present itself to those who look with understanding at the cross on Golgotha? Is birth, as the Buddha declared, suffering? Those who look with understanding at the cross on Golgotha, and feel united with it, say to themselves: 'Birth, after all, leads us to an earth that is able, from its own elements, to provide a raiment for the Christ. We will gladly tread this earth upon which Christ has walked. Union with Christ kindles in the soul the power to find its way up into the spiritual worlds, brings the realization that birth is not suffering but the gateway through which one must pass to find the Redeemer, who clothed Himself with the very same earthly substances which compose the bodily frame of a human being.'

Is illness suffering? No!—so said those who truly understood the impulse of Golgotha—no, illness is not suffering. Even if people cannot yet understand what the spiritual life